



THE LIBERTY BOYS OF '76'

A Weekly Magazine containing Stories of the American Revolution.

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Price 5 Cents.

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BY HARRY MOORE.



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CHAPTER I.

CONSTERNATION IN PHILADELPHIA.

On the morning of September 12, 1777, there was great excitement in Philadelphia.

There was great consternation also, for a messenger had just arrived in the city from Chester, with the news that the patriot army had been defeated the day before at Brandywine, and had been forced to retreat to Chester.

The patriot citizens of Philadelphia were alarmed. They felt confident that it was only a matter of a few days before the British would be in control of the city—and then what would they do?

A great many of the more timid patriots fled from the city and went to the mountains that were nearest at hand. Others, who were made of sterner material, remained, and said they would stand their ground, would stick to the ship.

Corrie fled to Lancaster, for it was reasoned that whatever might happen, it would not do for the governing body to be captured by the British.

The messenger who had brought the news to Philadelphia was a young man of perhaps nineteen years. He was a sun-bronzed, handsome youth, and his name was Dick Slater. He was the captain of a company of youths of about his own age, and they were known far and wide as "The Liberty Boys of '76."

The "Liberty Boys" were fighters, and were noted for their desperate daring on the battlefield. General Washington himself had more than once complimented the youths on their good work, and in the battle of Brandywine, fought the day before, the youths had covered themselves with glory.

Dick had been wounded in three places, but the wounds, fortunately, were all slight ones, and did not incapacitate him from duty; and when Washington wanted a messenger, one who could get through the country swarming with British and Tories, he chose the young "Liberty Boy."

The redcoats and Tories did not prove to be so very numerous between Chester and Philadelphia, after all, and Dick had not experienced much difficulty in getting to the city in safety.

The youth was with the leaders in Congress most of the day, answering questions, and it was not till five o'clock in the evening that he was ready to leave the city. In his pocket was a bulky document which conferred extraordi-

nary powers upon the commander-in-chief of the patriot army.

"Whatever you do, don't fail to deliver that paper to General Washington," Congress told the youth. "You are a famous and trusty messenger, we know, Dick Slater, and we want that you shall exercise your very best judgment and the most extreme care in this matter. Deliver the document into the hands of the commander-in-chief, and at the earliest possible moment."

The youth said that he would do so, and then, leaving headquarters, went to a tavern and ordered supper.

While sitting at the table, waiting for the meal to be served, Dick glanced about him, carelessly at first, but it did not take him long to note that a man who sat at a table a short distance away was watching him covertly.

The youth took particular note of the man's face and general appearance without appearing to do so, and he was not very favorably impressed.

"I can't say that I like that fellow's looks," Dick said to himself, "and I wonder why he is watching me?"

The man in question had entered the tavern shortly after Dick came in, and he had ordered supper also. It had not yet been brought, and presently he rose and approaching the table at which Dick sat, said:

"Your pardon, sir, but have you any objections to my taking a seat at the same table with yourself?"

"None whatever, sir," replied Dick, with apparent frankness. His tone and manner were such as would make the man think there was not the least semblance of suspicion in the youth's mind, but this was far from being the case. Somehow Dick felt that this man was dangerous—that he was an enemy, and not to be trusted.

The "Liberty Boy" thought that by having the fellow close, however, and permitting him to talk to him, he would be able to read him better, and perhaps might discover what the fellow really wanted.

"Thank you," said the stranger, and he took a seat at the opposite side of the table from Dick.

"Terrible thing, the defeat of the patriot army at Brandywine, was it not?" the stranger remarked, with a keen glance at Dick.

"Oh, as to that, sir," said Dick, "while we retreated, and retired to Chester, it was done more with regard to policy than from necessity. I am quite sure that the British suffered quite as great loss as we suffered."

"Ah, do you indeed think so?"

"Yes, I am sure of it."

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"Hum. That is good, if true," said the man, but there was lack of sincere feeling in the tone.

"You may be sure it is the truth, sir," said Dick.

"Let me see; you are the messenger who brought the news of the patriot defeat, are you not?"

"I am, sir."

"And your name is Slater?"

"It is. Dick Slater, sir."

"I have heard of you many times, my young friend; you have made a wonderful reputation as a scout, spy, and fighter for one so young."

"Oh, I am not so very young, sir," with a frank smile. "I am nineteen."

"A mere boy."

"Still, that does not cut much figure, sir. Boys are as a general thing more expert in the use of weapons than men of mature years."

"Well, that is true, I guess."

"Yes, and then they are stronger, more vigorous, and more capable of enduring hardships than are men five to ten years their senior."

"I don't know but you are right."

"I do not know your name, sir," said Dick, in an inquiring tone.

"My name?" hesitating slightly. "It is Ralph Winchester."

"Glad to know you, Mr. Winchester," said Dick.

At this juncture the waiter brought the suppers, and placed the food on the table, the two indulging in no more conversation until after the waiter had withdrawn. Then the man said:

"I suppose the patriot army will retreat to Philadelphia at once, will it not, Mr. Slater?"

"Ah, ha! he begins to ask questions," said Dick to himself. "I shall have to be very careful, for I believe he is a British spy."

Aloud he said, in a tone which indicated no suspicion at all, only frank simplicity:

"I am sure I do not know, sir. The commander-in-chief does not take the common soldiers into his confidence."

The man bit his lip slightly, and looked disconcerted; but he rallied quickly, and said:

"Ah, I suppose not. But I thought that perhaps to you, who are such a famous and successful scout and spy, he might have said something regarding his plans, when sending you here as messenger."

"No, he said nothing to me," said Dick.

Evidently the man who called himself Ralph Winchester was not satisfied. He eyed Dick searchingly, but covertly, and seemed to be asking himself whether or not the youth was speaking the truth.

If he had only known it, he was pitted against a youth who was possessed of more brains than himself, and who, while seemingly frank, candid, and unsuspecting, was keenly alive to the fact that he was sitting in the presence of an enemy who was trying to get information out of him.

"You may think you are pretty clever," thought Dick, "but when you get any information out of me regarding the intentions of General Washington or the probable movements of the patriot army, just let me know."

"I suppose that the patriot army will be forced to retreat to Philadelphia," said the man presently, more as if speaking to himself. "And then it will be forced to evacuate even the city, soon afterward—don't you think so, Mr. Slater?"

"I had not given the matter any thought, Mr. Winchester," was the cool reply. "I think it well not to try to look too far ahead."

"True; it is best not to do so, I judge, as a general thing, at least. In matters of this sort it is best to look as far ahead as possible, however, I think."

"Perhaps you are right."

They had been engaged upon their meal only a few minutes when three men entered the tavern and ordered something to eat.

It did not take Dick long to discover that the three newcomers were friends of the man who sat opposite him at the table.

"Confederates of Mr. Winchester," thought Dick. "I wonder what they are up to, anyway?"

He watched Winchester and the three men closely, without appearing to do so, and saw significant looks pass between them. Winchester made a number of movements with head and hands, too, which Dick was sure were signals to the three.

"I think they mean mischief," thought Dick. "Well, let it be so. I will do my best to make it interesting for them if they attempt to do me any injury."

Winchester kept up a running conversation with Dick, and did his best to get information out of the youth, but to no avail. Dick Slater was altogether too smart for his enemy.

At last Dick finished his supper, paid his score, and rose from the table.

"Good-by, Mr. Slater," said the man in a voice which could not help being heard by the three men at the other side of the room.

The "Liberty Boy" passed out of the tavern, and the door had no more than closed behind his back before the man who called himself Ralph Winchester leaped to his feet and hastened over to where the three men sat.

"That is Dick Slater, the famous rebel spy," he said, rapidly. "As you know, there is a reward of five hundred pounds offered for his capture, and besides, he is now the bearer of important despatches to General Washington. We must capture him and secure the despatches and the reward as well."

CHAPTER II.

REDCOATS FOILED.

"We are ready to help you," said one of the men. "All that you have to do is tell us what we are to do."

"We will mount our horses and follow him. We will overtake him somewhere between here and Chester, and make the capture."

"Very good; that suits us."

The four then hastened out of the tavern.

Meanwhile Dick had made his way to the stable where he had left his horse that morning, and ordered the animal to be bridled and saddled.

The "Liberty Boy" had kept a close watch behind him, after leaving the tavern, for he suspected that he would be followed; but he had been agreeably disappointed. No one had emerged from the tavern while he was in sight of the building, and he began to think that Winchester had made up his mind to be content with simply attempting to pump secrets from him.

"Well, that suits me," thought Dick. "Though I think that I would have been able to make it lively for even the four of them if they had tried to attack me."

When his horse was ready he mounted and rode away.

He rode at a moderate gait till he was out of the city, and then he urged his horse to a gallop.

It was twenty-six miles to Chester, and Dick wished to get there by ten or half-past, which he could do, he was confident.

There was no moon, but the night was a clear, star-lit one, and while it was not possible to see clearly any great distance, objects near at hand could be distinguished quite plainly.

When Dick had gone perhaps a mile he was given a surprise.

He came suddenly upon four horsemen, who were stretched across the road in such fashion as to make it a difficult matter to get past them.

The four had chosen a good place, for the road was quiet narrow at this spot, there being heavy timber at either side, and they had been just around a short bend, and were not visible until the youth was almost upon them.

In the hand of each of the four was a pistol, the barrels of which Dick could see glistening faintly in the starlight, and one of the four men cried out:

"Halt, Dick Slater! Stop, or you are a dead man!"

The youth reined his horse up instantly, and then an understanding of the matter came to him like a flash.

He recognized the voice as being that of the man who had sat at the table with him in the tavern, and Dick knew that the other three men were the same who had entered the tavern and taken seats at another table, and to whom Winchester had made signals.

"They have taken a short cut, and got in ahead of me," the youth said to himself. "Jove, I wish I had thought of that, and put my horse to his best speed. Then I would have been past this point before they could have reached here."

Aloud he said, in a firm, ringing voice:

"Who are you, and what do you want?"

"Ha, ha, ha," laughed the leader of the four. "Don't

you know me, Dick Slater? Why, I only a short half hour ago took supper with you. You ought to know me."

"Oh, I know now; you are Mr. Winchester."

"Yes, yes. I am Mr. Winchester—ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, Mr. Winchester, what do you want?" the "Liberty Boy" said in a voice which was as cool and calm as could be. Evidently he was not greatly frightened.

"I will tell you what we want, Dick Slater," was the reply. "First we want you."

"Oh, you want me?"

"Yes."

"What for?"

"Because you are valuable."

"I don't understand you." The youth thought he understood, but he was talking to gain time, in order to devise some way of foiling the scoundrels and making his escape.

"You will understand when I tell you all."

"Go ahead."

"Well, you are Dick Sater, and the British commander-in-chief, General Howe, has placed a reward of five hundred pounds on your head."

"Has he indeed?"

"He has."

"I am glad to know that he rates me so highly."

"So are we," with a chuckle, "for we are going to get that reward."

"Oh, that is your idea, eh?"

"Yes."

"Then you are British soldiers or spies in disguise?"

"You have guessed it, Dick Slater."

"Humph. You have played a very shrewd trick on me, haven't you?"

"I think so," with another chuckle.

"And you are determined to take me prisoner?"

"We are. And now, kindly hold your hands above your head, Dick Slater. We know you are rather a dangerous man, and do not intend to take any chances with you."

"All right, sir; anything to oblige you. I will put my hands up, for there are four of you, but—there are now only two!" and as he spoke the last five words, Dick jerked a pair of pistols out of his belt like a flash, and fired two shots with such deadly aim that two of the redcoats fell to the ground, dead or seriously wounded.

Then Dick uttered a peculiar whistle, and the horse he was mounted on gave a sudden leap to one side. At the same time the rider ducked down, until his body was nearly hidden behind the animal's neck and shoulders, and the two shots that were fired by Winchester and his remaining companion did no damage.

As he made the move described Dick replaced the two pistols in his belt and drew two more. Then, the instant he heard the shots from the enemy's weapons, he straightened up and fired both pistols, dropping Winchester's comrade out of the saddle, while the leader himself gave utterance to a cry of pain, and dropped forward upon his horse's neck.

This frightened the horse, and it dashed away, in the direction of Chester, while Dick urged his horse in pursuit.

"There, I rather think I got the better of those scoundrels, after all!" thought the youth, with a feeling of satisfaction. "They thought they had me in their power, but slipped up on it."

The youth urged his horse to its best speed, in the hope that he might overtake Winchester, and he did gain on the fugitive.

Closer and closer Dick drew to the fleeing man, and as he came close up behind the fugitive Dick saw that the fellow was still lying forward on the horse's neck, as if badly wounded.

Closer and closer Dick drew, and then he came up alongside the other. As he did so, Winchester suddenly straightened up, extended his arm, and Dick saw a pistol was grasped in the hand.

Crack! went the weapon.

Winchester, although wounded severely, had attempted to kill the patriot youth, and came very near succeeding. Dick realized his danger, and knocked the other's hand up just in time, and the bullet whistled over his head.

"Foiled!" half-gasped Winchester, and then he sank forward on his horse's neck once more.

Seeing there was nothing more to fear from the wounded man, Dick reached out, took hold of the rein, and pulled the horse down to an ordinary gallop, and then to a walk.

"Where are you wounded, Winchester?" asked Dick.

"In—the—left shoulder," was the reply. The voice was faint, and Dick realized that the man was rapidly growing weak from loss of blood.

"It will be impossible for me to take him to Chester," said Dick to himself, "so I think the best thing I can do is to stop at the first house I come to, and turn him over to the care of the people there."

The "Liberty Boy" was humane, and did not wish to let the spy die, tricky as the fellow had been, and much as Winchester had intended causing him all the trouble possible.

Half a mile farther on Dick came to a farmhouse.

He brought the horses to a stop, and looked at the wounded man, and then at the house.

The house was lighted up, and the sound of music and dancing came to the youth's ears.

"Jove, it will spoil the sport of those young people if I take the rascal in there," the youth thought. "But, then, they can get along if they don't get to dance till morning. If I were to go on to the next house this man might lose so much blood that he could not live. I will take him in here and leave him in the care of the people."

The "Liberty Boy" leaped to the ground, and leading the horses to the fence, tied them. Then he stepped to the side of Winchester's horse, and taking hold of the wounded man, shook him slightly, and said:

"How are you feeling? Are you conscious yet?"

"Yes," was the reply in a faint whisper, "but—I'm—as—near—death's—door as—a—man—can well—be."

"Oh, you'll be all right," said Dick. "I am going to take you into this house, and give you all the attention possible. I think you will be all right, and will recover in the course of a few weeks."

"I—hope—so." The voice was very faint, and Dick felt that no time was to be lost.

The youth was wonderfully strong, and he took hold of the wounded man, and carefully lifted him out of the saddle. Then, taking the man in his arms, as if he were an infant, almost, Dick carried him across the yard and up on the porch. He rapped on the door, and a voice called out:

"Who is there?"

The music and dancing had just stopped, a quadrille having just been finished, and the knock was heard within, where otherwise it would not have been.

"A friend," replied Dick. "Open the door at once, please."

The next instant the door was opened by a woman, who, when she saw Dick standing there with a man all covered with blood in his arms, gave utterance to a scream and ran away.

The "Liberty Boy" did not hesitate, however, but stepped across the threshold into the room.

Perhaps twenty youths and maidens were in the room, and exclamations and cries of wonder and affright escaped the lips of all.

"Oh, a dead man!" cried several of the girls, in chorus. "How terrible!"

"He is not dead, young ladies," said Dick. "He is wounded, and I wish to have him taken care of here. Where is the man or woman of the house?"

"I am the man of the house, sir," said a man, appearing from an adjoining room, into which the frightened woman had fled, after opening the door. "You say the man is wounded, and you wish to have him cared for here?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very well. Bring him along. We will take him to an upstairs room, where the noise will not be heard by him."

"Let me help you carry him, sir," said a handsome, frank-faced fellow of about Dick's age.

"Thank you," said Dick. "But I can carry him."

Then Dick followed the man of the house out of the room, along a hall, and up a flight of stairs and into a room at one side.

There was a bed in one corner, and the man motioned toward it, and said:

"Place him on the bed."

"You had better get an old blanket, or something, sir," said Dick. "You see, he is bleeding, and it will spoil the bed-clothes if we are not careful."

"Here is the very thing," throwing open a closet-door, and bringing forth an old blanket. This he spread on the bed, and then Dick paced the wounded man gently thereon.

Winchester was weak as an infant, and almost unconscious.

"Place the candle on the table, there," said Dick. "And then bring me some clean cloths to use as bandages, and some water, and such things as you have in the way of salves."

The man did as told, and was soon back, with the things Dick had asked for. The frank-faced young fellow who had asked to help carry the wounded man came along, and he watched Dick with interest, while the youth washed the wound and applied the salve and bandages.

"Now a bit of brandy or wine, if you have it, sir," said Dick to the man of the house. "You see, the wounded man is unconscious, and we must bring him to."

The man hastened away, but was back soon with a bottle of wine, and a glass.

The "Liberty Boy" poured some wine in the glass, and then forced some of it between the unconscious man's lips. He kept this up till at last the spy gave a slight gasp, and opened his eyes.

"He will be all right, now, I think, sir," said Dick to the man. "All that will be necessary is that he be given careful nursing, and he will be able to get out and around in a couple of weeks."

"Who and what is he?" the man asked, "and how came he to be wounded?"

The "Liberty Boy" shook his head.

"It isn't best to tell all one knows," he said with a smile, "and least of all is it wise to do so in these troublous times. I will simply say that he is a man quite seriously wounded, and that for humanity's sake you should be willing to do what you can for him, and let it go at that."

"I think I understand," said the man with a smile. "You and this wounded man are enemies, and likely one is a redcoat, the other a patriot. In truth, I suspect that you gave the man his wound."

"You have a right to surmise what you like, sir," was the smiling reply. "As for me, I must be going. You will find this man's horse at the front-yard fence, and can do what you please with the animal."

"We will look after him."

"Very well. And now, good-by."

At this instant loud voices were heard coming up from below, and the words could be plainly distinguished. What the three heard was:

"We want the rebel spy, Dick Slater. He is in this house, we know, for his horse is at the gate, as is also the horse of a friend of ours, who, we think, is wounded. They must both be here. Where are they—upstairs?"

In some manner friends of Winchester had learned that Dick Slater had wounded the British spy, and had followed him to this house.

"You are Dick Slater?" asked the man of the house eagerly.

The "Liberty Boy" was impressed by the look on the man's face and the tone of his voice with the belief that he was a patriot, so replied unhesitatingly:

"I am Dick Slater."

"Then I will save you," was the man's next words. "I am Wilson Metcalf, a patriot who has six sons in the patriot army."

CHAPTER III.

DICK ESCAPES.

"Thank you!" said Dick.

"Come," said Mr. Metcalf, "we must get out of here. Harry, will you stay here with the wounded man?" this to the handsome young man.

"Certainly, Mr. Metcalf," was the reply.

Then the man hastened out of the room, Dick following close at his heels.

The patriot led the way along the hall, to the farther end, where there was a window. This window he hastily raised, for the trampling of feet could be heard on the front stairs, and it was evident that the British were coming upstairs.

"Climb out, quickly," he said to Dick. "And good-by. I hope you will reach the patriot army safely."

"I guess I shall, sir. Thank you for your good wishes. Good-by." Then he was through the window, and sliding down the sloping roof of a shed-room in a jiffy.

Mr. Metcalf then closed the window and hastened back to the room where Harry Jones—such was the young man's name—and the wounded spy were. He was fortunate enough to reach there before the British appeared.

Only a very few moments elapsed before the English put in an appearance, however. There were six of them, and when they saw their wounded comrade lying on the bed, exclamations escaped their lips, and they looked around for the patriot spy, Dick Slater.

"There he is! That is Dick Slater. Seize him, men!" cried one, pointing to Harry Jones; but Mr. Metcalf interposed, and motioned the soldiers back.

"You are mistaken," he said. "This young man is not Dick Slater."

"He is not?" doubtfully.

"No."

"I don't believe you. Where is Dick Slater if this is not he?"

"He was here, but left the instant he heard your voices."

It was evident that the redcoats did not place much credence in Mr. Metcalf's statement. They thought that Harry Jones was Dick Slater, and that the man was trying to deceive them, so that Dick might escape."

"Which way did Dick Slater go?" the redcoat leader asked.

"He went along the hall, to the rear, and climbed out of the window."

The redcoats looked at one another dubiously and ques-

tioningly. It was plain that they were puzzled, and did not know what to think.

They turned and looked at their wounded friend on the bed.

The leader stepped to the bedside, and spoke to Winchester, but the wounded man made no reply. The truth was that he was in a semi-stupor brought on by the weakness caused by the loss of so much blood, and he was in no condition to understand, much less answer a question."

"Jove, Winchester looks like he is about done for," said one of the soldiers.

"So he does," from another. "That fellow, Dick Slater, is a bad man."

"And I believe this is Dick——" began the leader, with his eyes on Harry's face, but he broke off, as the sound of a pistol-shot from out of doors came to their hearing.

"Maybe this man has told the truth, after all," said one of the redcoats. "Likely George saw Dick Slater, and fired upon him when he came to get his horse."

"Two of you stay here and guard this young fellow," said the leader. "The rest of us will see about this other matter."

Then he and three of his comrades hastened out of the room, while two remained, to keep watch of Harry Jones.

The redcoats were right in their surmise. Their comrade, who had been left in charge of the horses, did fire the pistol-shot, and he fired at Dick Slater.

The "Liberty Boy" got to the ground in safety, after coming down the shed-roof, and hastened toward where he had left his and Winchester's horses.

He did not see that there was a soldier on guard over the horses until he was almost upon the fellow. But for that matter, the redcoat did not see him much quicker, and the pistol-shot was fired so quickly that no aim could be taken, and Dick was not injured.

The soldier did not have an opportunity to fire another shot, for Dick leaped forward, and dealt him a blow on the jaw, knocking him down.

The blow had been delivered with all Dick's strength, and the redcoat was temporarily dazed, and lay where he had fallen.

Knowing that the other redcoats would soon appear, Dick lost no time, but untied his horse, vaulted into the saddle, and dashed away down the road in the direction of Chester.

As he did so the young men and girls came pouring out through the front door, alarmed by the pistol-shot, and anxious to discover what it was about.

Perhaps two minutes later, while the youths stood grouped around the body of the trooper Dick had knocked down, and whom they had hauled out from under the hoofs of the horses, the four redcoats came rushing out to the road.

"Ha, what is the matter with George?" cried the leader, stooping and looking in the face of the unconscious man.

"He was lying under the horses, sir," said one of the youths, "and we pulled him away, and laid him here."

"I have no doubt that that scoundrel, Dick Slater, did this," the leader of the redcoats cried.

"Perhaps one of the horses kicked him, sir," suggested one of the youths.

"That is possible, too, and—ah, George is coming to."

"Give him a few drops of this," said one of the other soldiers, tendering a bottle.

The leader placed the mouth of the flask to the injured man's lips, and some of the liquor went down his throat, causing him to cough. It had the desired effect, however, and a few minutes later the man was sitting up and looking around him in a dazed manner.

"Where is Dick Slater? Did you see him, George?" asked the leader eagerly.

"Yes," was the reply. "And shot at him, too."

"And missed him?"

"Yes; and then he hit me a terrible clip on the jaw, and knocked me silly. I didn't know anything for a few moments, and then, just as I was starting to get up, one of the horses, in jumping about, struck me with his hoof, and that's all I knew till just now."

"Well, you go in the house and tell Jim and Bob that the young fellow they are guarding is not Dick Slater, and to not bother with him any more. We are going to give chase to that rebel rascal, and catch him if possible."

"All right. I'll do as you say, captain."

The man addressed as captain, and his three comrades, hastened to mount and dash away down the road in the direction of Chester, and George made his way into the house, followed by the youths and maidens, and on up to the room where Winchester lay, one of the young men showing him the way.

"Captain Shannon says for you not to bother with this young man, boys," he said, addressing his two comrades who were standing guard over Harry Jones. "He is not Dick Slater."

"Of course I am not," said Harry smilingly. "Mr. Metcalf, here, told you that, but you wouldn't believe him."

"All right. You are free to go, young fellow," said one of the two. Then he asked the redcoat, George, to tell what had happened outside, and the fellow did so, explaining the matter the same as he had to Captain Shannon.

"They won't catch Dick Slater," said the redcoat who asked for information. "He is too slippery altogether, and he has a good start, and a good horse, so the captain and the boys might as well have saved themselves the trouble of chasing him to no purpose."

"Well, there's nothing like trying. They might be successful."

"No danger."

Then the three turned their attention to their wounded comrade, and one poured some liquor between Winchester's lips, which had the effect of stimulating him.

He recognized the three, and nodded his head feebly, in

greeting, while they told him how sorry they were that he was in such a bad fix.

Winchester's lips moved, but the whispered words were so faint that they could not be heard two feet away, and one of the redcoats placed his ear down close to the wounded man's lips.

"What does he want?" asked one of the others.

"He wants to know how we came to know about Dick Slater, and that he had been wounded," was the reply. Then he turned back and said to Winchester:

"Captain Shannon and six of us were riding along the road, about two miles from here, and we came to a place where there had been trouble of some kind, we knew, for there were three forms lying in the road. The forms were those of your three comrades, Winchester, and two of the boys were dead; but the other was only wounded, and not so bad but that he could tell us how it happened. He told us you had tried to capture Dick Slater, but that the rebel had turned the tables on you, and had killed the two, and wounded him and you. He said that your horse had dashed away down the road, in this direction, with you on its back, and with Dick Slater in pursuit, and so we waited only long enough to bury the two dead men, and carry the wounded man to a house over in a field not far away, and then, leaving him there to be taken care of, we set out in pursuit of the rebel. When we got here to this house, we saw two horses tied to the fence, and came to the conclusion that you and Dick Slater were here. We stopped and entered, but the rebel rascal succeeded in getting away."

Harry Jones went downstairs, leaving Mr. Metcalf to talk to the redcoats, and soon the young folks, who had been having such a jolly time dancing, dispersed for their homes.

As the last party was leaving, Captain Shannon and his three comrades returned, and making their way into the house and up to the room where the wounded man lay, reported that they had not been able to get within seeing distance of Dick Slater.

"I'm glad he escaped!" said Mr. Metcalf, coolly, and the angry looks on the faces of the redcoats did not seem to worry him a bit, for he met the black looks with a smile.

CHAPTER IV.

MR. METCALF'S DANGER.

"You had better be careful how you talk," growled Captain Shannon.

"I don't see why I should be," was the quiet reply. "I am glad, and as an honest man, I am free to own it."

"That may be all very well in ordinary times, but in these times it is not good policy, for it might cause a man to lose his head."

"Yes, I suppose it might. Still, I have talked just that way during the entire time the war has been going on,

and have not had anything happen to me as a result up to the present."

"Perhaps there have been no British soldiers in this vicinity."

"True, there has not been. But surely British soldiers would not bother me for simply expressing my views?"

The captain laughed harshly.

"I'll tell you something, sir," he said. "If it wasn't for our comrade, there, who will have to remain here two or three weeks, likely, we would burn your house down over your head in punishment to you for what you said a few moments ago."

"You would?"

"Yes."

A frown came over the face of Mr. Metcalf.

"Then you are bigger scoundrels than I gave any of the British soldiers credit for being," he said firmly.

"Be careful!" hissed the captain. "Don't go too far. We are not the most patient men in the world, and we may decide to hang you up by the neck, after all."

"Go ahead and do so if you like," was the defiant reply. "I have six sons in the patriot army, and even though you hang me, I shall yet strike you blow after blow through flesh of my flesh and blood of my blood in the persons of my boys."

"Why, you are the most insolent rebel I have ever run across," cried Captain Shannon. "Seize him, men! We will take him down to a tree and string him up. Such poisonous reptiles should not be permitted to live and pollute the atmosphere."

The soldiers leaped forward and seized Mr. Metcalf. He realized that it would do no good to fight, and so made no resistance.

They led him downstairs, and when Mrs. Metcalf and Jennie, their seventeen-year-old daughter, saw their husband and father a prisoner in the hands of the British, they were frightened nearly to death, and in trembling voices asked the captain what he intended doing with the prisoner.

"We are going to hang him," was the blunt and brutal reply.

"Hang him!" cried Mrs. Metcalf. "What has he done?"

"Oh, please do not hang him," pleaded Jennie.

"He is a saucy rebel," replied Captain Shannon. "He talked insolently to me, and called myself and men scoundrels."

"Oh, why did you do so, Wilson?" wailed Mrs. Metcalf.

"Because it is the truth," was the reply. "They are scoundrels, or they would not think of harming a non-combatant because he is opposed to them."

"You hear how insolent he is, woman?" cried the captain, his face red with anger. "We will string him up if it is the last thing we do on earth."

The woman and girl burst into tears, and pleaded with the redcoats, but to no avail, and Mr. Metcalf himself said to the two:

"You are simply wasting your breath, Mary and Jennie. Don't say anything more, but let them hang me, if they

choose. My six boys will amply avenge me when they learn of what has taken place."

"Bring him along, boys," cried Captain Shannon. "He is insolent beyond all belief, and the quicker we stretch his neck the better I shall feel."

The six redcoats dragged Mr. Metcalf out of the room and house, and to a tree which stood a short distance away. A rope was procured, a noose was made in one end, and this was placed around the patriot's neck. Then the other end of the rope was thrown over a limb, and the redcoats seized hold of it.

Mrs. Metcalf and Jennie, weeping, had followed and now stood near by. They were going on at a great rate, and begging the officer to spare the life of their husband and father.

"I will spare his life on one condition," was the reply.

"What is the condition?" asked Mr. Metcalf.

"That you take the oath of allegiance to the king, and swear that you will at all times speak in favor of him, fight for him, and do all you can for him and his cause."

"Oh, do it, Wilson," cried Mrs. Metcalf. "Take the oath! What is that to do, if by so doing you save your life?"

"Yes; take the oath, father!" cried Jennie.

Mr. Metcalf was on the point of refusing to take the oath, but another thought came to him. "I'll take the oath," he said to himself; "but I will make a mental reservation, to the effect that I do it merely to save my life, and that henceforth I will do all I possibly can against the king, instead of for him. All is fair in war, and it will be no sin to deceive these scoundrels. Yes, I'll take the oath, and then from this night forth I shall take as active part as is possible in the war, and do all I can against the British and King George, whom I hate and despise."

Aloud he said:

"Very well, captain. I will take the oath of allegiance."

"Ah, you have come to your senses, have you?" said the captain sneeringly.

"Thank heaven!" murmured Mrs. Metcalf.

"I am so glad!" from Jennie.

"I have said that I will take the oath," replied Mr. Metcalf, with dignity.

"All right; then we will spare your life, though I doubt whether I should have made you the offer I did had not our comrade, Winchester, been lying wounded in your house. I wish him to be well taken care of, and so I am willing to let you go free, on your taking the oath of allegiance."

"I am ready to take it, sir."

"Very good. I will administer it at once."

The captain did so, Mr. Metcalf repeating the oath after the officer unhesitatingly, but making mental reservations as he went along, and when he had finished the patriot had in reality taken an oath to fight against the king and do him all the damage possible.

"I rather think I have fooled you, my bold captain!" said the patriot to himself, "and it serves you right. Instead of gaining another recruit in the cause of the king,

you have made me a bitter and uncompromising enemy of his cause. Henceforth I shall not be satisfied to remain passive, but will act on every possible occasion, and now that the war has come to our very doors I have no doubt but that I shall be able to find much to do."

As soon as the oath had been administered, the rope was taken off the patriot's neck, his hands were unbound, and he was set free.

"We hail you, an adherent of the good King George!" said the captain, and the patriot simply bowed coldly, and while making no audible reply, said to himself:

"You can hail me as an adherent of the 'good' King George all you want to, but that is all the good it will do for you. Every chance I get I will make it warm for the representatives of this same tyrant king!"

Mrs. Metcalf and Jennie were delighted, and hugged and kissed the husband and father in joyous thanksgiving.

"I am so glad you took the oath, and saved your life," murmured Mrs. Metcalf.

"And so am I, father!" said Jennie.

"For your sakes I do not wish to lose my life, dears," he said, "and so I was willing to save it by taking the oath."

"And you will do well to abide by the terms of the oath, Mr. Metcalf—I believe you said that is your name—and do as you have sworn to do," said the captain.

"I shall certainly abide by my oath," was the reply. But the patriot did not explain that he had taken a ~~contrary~~ mental oath in place of the one the captain had administered.

All now re-entered the house, and the men went up to the room occupied by the wounded man. He was asleep, and as he seemed to be resting easy, it was decided to not disturb him.

"Myself and comrades will be going," said Captain Shannon, "and we will leave our friend here in your house. Of course you will take the best of care of him."

"Certainly," replied Mr. Metcalf, and he meant it, for he was a humane man, and would not have stooped to injure a wounded man.

"Very good. Then we will say good-night and return to the army, in the vicinity of Chester. I will try and get back here in a few days, however, to see how Winchester is getting along."

"Very well. Good-night," said Mr. Metcalf, and the redcoats took their departure.

Mr. Metcalf went downstairs, and found his wife and daughter in the sitting-room.

"Oh, Wilson, what an evening of excitement and terror this has been," cried Mrs. Metcalf, her voice trembling with excitement.

"But it's all over for now, Mary," he said, with a smile. "So quiet your nerves, and don't worry."

"But it is terrible, your having to take an oath of allegiance to the king, isn't it, father," said Jennie. "What will my brothers say?"

"They will say I did just right, Jennie," was the smile.

ing reply, "for I took a mental oath of allegiance to the great cause of Liberty, while I was repeating the oath administered by the British captain, and the spoken words had no significance whatever. I am a patriot, the same as ever, and a stronger one than ever, and I am determined now to take as active part in the war as is possible, and whenever I see a chance to strike the British a blow, you may be sure I will improve it."

The woman and girl stared at him in amazement; on the woman's face was a look of fear, but the girl's face shone with delight.

"I am afraid you will get yourself into serious trouble, Wilson," said his wife.

"Oh, I am so glad the oath Captain Shannon administered does not amount to anything, father!" cried Jennie, who was a staunch little patriot, the same as were her brothers.

Mrs. Metcalf was a patriot also, but her fears for the safety of her husband made her dubious as to the result if he went against the king, after taking the oath of allegiance.

"I am not afraid of getting into trouble, Mary," said the patriot. "I will deceive the British by making them think I am for the king, and will do all I can against them, at the same time. All is fair in war."

CHAPTER V.

THE "LIBERTY BOYS" AT WORK.

After knocking the redcoat guard down, mounting his horse, and dashing away, Dick Slater rode onward in the direction of Chester at the best speed of his horse—and that was at a swift pace, for his horse was a splendid animal.

The "Liberty Boy" was confident he would be pursued, and he did not feel disposed to let his enemies get within pistol-shot distance of him.

"If they catch me, they will have to have better horses than I think they have," he said to himself.

He listened for sounds of pursuit, but did not hear any, and the reason was because the pursuers never got close enough to make themselves heard.

Onward the youth rode, and gradually he slackened the speed of his horse till the animal was going at an ordinary ~~gallop~~.

"There is no need of tiring yourself out, Major, old boy," the youth said, patting the horse on the neck. "We have left the enemy so far behind that we are out of danger, I am sure."

A little more than an hour later Dick arrived at Chester, where the patriot army was encamped. He was challenged as he approached, but gave the countersign, and was permitted to pass on into the town.

The youth rode at once to the house where the command-

der-in-chief and his staff officers had their headquarters, and was so fortunate as to find them up, although it was now nearly eleven o'clock.

The "Liberty Boy" was greeted warmly, when he was ushered into the room by the orderly, for all knew he had gone to Philadelphia with the news of the defeat at Brandywine the day before, and with a message to Congress, and all were eager to hear what Congress had to say.

"Here are some documents which Congress gave me to deliver to you, sir," said Dick, handing the papers to General Washington.

The commander-in-chief took the documents, broke the seals, and read the contents of the important papers.

When he had finished he laid the papers on his desk, and turned so as to face his officers.

"Gentlemen," he said impressively, "Congress has in these papers brought me by Mr. Slater conferred upon me extraordinary powers. Congress has left Philadelphia, and gone to Lancaster, and I am here empowered to do as I see fit in every respect, and to go ahead without reference to what Congress might think should be done."

"That is what I call sensible action on the part of Congress," said General Greene quietly.

The other officers nodded their heads, for they were well aware of the fact that Congress had mixed things up on several occasions, and practically spoiled the plans of the commander-in-chief, by interfering and giving orders that were the opposite of what the exigencies of the situation demanded. Now, however, armed with the power to do as he judged best, the commander-in-chief could go ahead and do something.

He was pleased, though he did not say much. General Washington was not much for making complaint; instead of doing so, he would go ahead and do the best he could, even though handicapped; but now it would be much easier for him to do the work, for he had carte blanche to do as he pleased.

The commander-in-chief passed the documents around, and the officers read the contents. They were delighted, and one and all expressed themselves as being so.

General Washington now turned to Dick, and asked him many questions regarding how the news was received in Philadelphia, and what had been said by the members of Congress.

The "Liberty Boy" answered all the questions promptly and satisfactorily, and then the commander-in-chief and his staff began talking of their plans for bringing about the discomfiture of the British.

"Gentlemen," said Washington, after they had been talking awhile, "as you all know, the British have recently been defeated at Bennington, and also at Fort Stanwix. This, of course, will make Burgoyne's task of reaching and conquering Albany much more difficult."

"Yes, indeed," said General Greene.

"It is my sincere belief," continued the commander-in-chief, "that without the co-operation and aid of Howe and

his army, Burgoyne cannot possibly succeed in his purpose, and such being the case, it seems plain that if we can keep Howe and his army detained here long enough, Burgoyne will inevitably be forced to surrender."

"That seems more than likely," said General Wayne.

"Yes, I think so," agreed General Greene.

Some of the officers acknowledged that they had not thought of this, but agreed that, now that it had been presented to their notice, it seemed more than probable that the matter would turn out as expected by the commander-in-chief.

And this simply showed what a wonderful genius was that of Washington. He was possessed of a master mind, which enabled him to look over the whole chess-board and, taking everything into consideration, figure out the probable moves of his enemy. Every little engagement was as the move of a pawn in a game of chess, and while not in itself of such great importance, yet as contributing to the results of the entire game, was of great aid. In this respect General Washington was far and away the greatest of all the generals engaged in the war of the Revolution, on either side—with the possible exception of General Greene, whose genius, as displayed in the South, where he completely outgeneraled Cornwallis, was scarcely less than that of the commander-in-chief, and there are those who think that, had he had the same opportunities that Washington had, the results secured would have been scarcely inferior to the results brought about by the commander-in-chief's genius.

"The thing for us to do, then," said Washington, "is to keep Howe and his army employed here as long as possible, so as to keep them from going to Burgoyne's assistance."

"That is certainly the proper thing to do," agreed General Greene.

The matter was discussed at length, and a full understanding was reached as to what tactics should be employed.

It was decided that the main body of the patriot army should keep in front of the main body of the British army, and hold it in check, and retard its advance all that was possible. At the same time small skirmishing parties of from one to three hundred men would worry the British by making sudden attacks on the enemy's flanks, and in the case of cavalry, even from the rear.

The "Liberty Boys," being in the cavalry division, would come in for this sort of work, and Dick was delighted when he was told what he would have to do.

"That just suits me!" he said. "And it will suit my 'Liberty Boys,' too. They will be delighted, and I think we shall be able to make it lively for the redcoats."

"That is what we wish done," said the commander-in-chief. "Make it as lively for them as possible. If we can retard the progress of the British, and hold them back from reaching Philadelphia till a week or ten days have elapsed, then I think we will have insured the defeat of Burgoyne in the North."

Presently Dick bade the commander-in-chief and officers

good-night, and went to the quarters occupied by the "Liberty Boys."

They were lying down, sound asleep, and Dick did not wake any of them. He found his blanket, rolled himself up, and was soon asleep.

He was up bright and early next morning, however, and as soon as the youths were up he told them what their work would be for the next week or so.

The youths were, as he had felt confident they would be, delighted.

"That's the very kind of work I like!" cried Bob Estabrook, who was a bright, handsome youth of about Dick's age. He was Dick's chum and right-hand man, in fact, they having been playmates and friends all their lives, the homes of their parents being adjoining, up in New York state.

"It's the kind of work I like, too!"

"And so do I!"

"I would rather do that sort of work than eat when I'm hungry."

"And so would I."

Such were a few of the exclamations from the lips of the delighted "Liberty Boys."

The youths cooked their breakfasts, and talked as they ate.

They were full of life and animation, and could not keep quiet.

When the soldiers of the patriot army had breakfast, preparations were begun for the work that had been decided upon.

The "Liberty Boys" were sent to worry the British right flank, while another body of cavalry was sent to worry the left flank.

Other parties of infantry, of from one hundred to two hundred men, were sent out, with instructions to watch for opportunities to strike the British a blow, and to improve every such opportunity to the utmost.

The main army held itself in readiness to engage the main army of the British at any moment, if necessary to do so.

There were several skirmishes before noon, and the British seemed hardly to know what to think of the tactics that were being employed by the patriots.

The "Liberty Boys" had not yet engaged the enemy in any way; Dick was waiting for a favorable opportunity, when he would strike a blow that would be felt and remembered.

About the middle of the afternoon Dick climbed a tree and took a survey of the situation. He was so fortunate as to locate a party of perhaps three hundred redcoats, which had advanced quite a distance ahead of the main army.

"We must strike that party," he said to himself. "I think we can do it, and get away before reinforcements can reach the enemy."

He slid down, and told the "Liberty Boys" what he had seen, and they were eager for the work.

"Just lead the way, Dick, and we will follow," said Bob. "We must strike at least one telling blow, to-day."

"Very well. Mount, and come on," said Dick, as he vaulted into the saddle. "Follow me, all."

The youths leaped into the saddles, and followed their brave young leader.

He led them by a roundabout course, and then, when he had got away around to one side, he turned, and followed by his "Liberty Boys," rode in the direction of the party of redcoats.

As there was a scattered growth of timber, and considerable in the way of bushes and undergrowth, it was possible to approach to within a comparatively short distance of the party of redcoats without their coming being discovered.

Presently Dick called a halt, and dismounting, stole forward to reconnoiter.

It took him only a few minutes to discover the exact location of the enemy, and he hastened back, mounted, and told the boys to follow.

"Be in readiness to fire a volley and dash upon the enemy at the signal from me," he told them, and they nodded, to show that they understood, and would do the work.

Then they rode forward, slowly and cautiously, until the edge of the clump of timber in which they then were was reached, and here Dick called another halt.

He pointed to another clump of trees, standing one hundred yards distant. The trees were scattered, but there was considerable underbrush. It would be possible to ride through it on horses, however, and this was what Dick purposed doing.

"The party of redcoats is in that clump of timber," he said. "We will charge right into it, and fire a volley, and then draw our swords and trample and cut the redcoats down. Are you ready?"

The "Liberty Boys" nodded their heads, and then Dick gave the signal to charge.

The next moment the one hundred "Liberty Boys" dashed across the intervening open space like a thunderbolt, and went crashing in among the trees and underbrush—and among the redcoats as well.

CHAPTER VI.

SKIRMISHING.

Crash!—roar!

The "Liberty Boys" fired a volley at close range from their pistols, and did terrible execution, for they were expert shots, even from horses' backs, could do better shooting than most men, in fact, could do when standing still, on the ground.

The redcoats had been taken by surprise.

They were not looking for an attack from the rear, and had not suspected their danger until it was too late to avoid being struck a severe blow.

Screams and groans of pain went up from the wounded, and wild yells went up from those who had escaped damage.

"Draw and cut the scoundrels down!" yelled Dick, and drawing his sword, he cut about him with lusty strokes.

His men were not slow to do likewise, and although the redcoats did fire a volley or two, the shots were so hastily discharged that not much damage was done.

Two of the "Liberty Boys" were killed, and three or four were wounded, but this, as against the damage that was inflicted upon the redcoats by the "Liberty Boys," was nothing.

Of the three hundred British soldiers who constituted the party, more than two hundred were killed and wounded by the terrible "Liberty Boys" in a very short space of time.

Fearing the reinforcements from the main army might get there and strike his "Liberty Boys" a blow, however, Dick ordered that they should continue onward, and the party galloped ahead, leaving the enemy almost paralyzed—what there was left of the party.

When the reinforcements reached the scene, and it was seen what havoc had been done in the ranks of their comrades, the redcoats were almost wild with rage.

That was all the good it did them, however. They realized that it would be impossible to follow the "Liberty Boys," who were mounted on swift horses, and were already quite a distance away.

All they could do was grit their teeth and endure it with the best grace possible.

They buried their dead, looked after their wounded, and then a messenger was sent to inform General Howe of the catastrophe.

As may be supposed, the British general was wild with rage.

The thought that nearly two hundred of his veteran soldiers had been shot and cut down by the "Liberty Boys," and only two of the youths had been killed to pay for it was maddening.

"Those 'Liberty Boys' are more dangerous than all the rest of the rebel army," he declared, "and that young fellow, Dick Slater, is one of the shrewdest young fellows alive."

"He certainly is," agreed one of the British officers.

"I wish it were possible to capture him."

"If that could be done it would cut down the usefulness of the 'Liberty Boys' considerable," said the officer. "Without their head they would not be able to do these things that make them a terror to us."

"You are right, but it will be difficult to capture him. You know Captain Shannon reported this morning that attempts were made by himself and six comrades, and also by Ralph Winchester, our best spy, and three of his comrades, and that they failed to capture Dick Slater."

"I know. And two of the men with Winchester were killed, and Winchester himself and another were seriously wounded by the young rebel."

"That's right; and he escaped from Captain Shannon and his men."

"Oh, he is a hard man to catch napping, General Howe."

"Yes, indeed. But I hope that some of our men may succeed in capturing him sooner or later."

"I hope so."

Meanwhile Dick and his "Liberty Boys" had galloped over to Chester and reported their success in striking the British a severe blow.

The commander-in-chief was delighted.

"That is the way to do it, Dick," he said. "If we can keep on striking small parties of the British, after that fashion, we will be able to hold them back and make their advance very slow; and that is what I wish to do."

"We will try to do our part, your excellency," said Dick, with a smile, and then he saluted and withdrew.

When the soldiers of the main army learned that the "Liberty Boys" had whipped the British they were delighted, and as the youths rode away to watch for another chance at the enemy they were given cheer after cheer.

The soldiers threw their hats in the air, and many danced with delight.

"I tell you, the 'Liberty Boys' will make the redcoats wish they had never been born," cried one enthusiastic soldier.

"You are right," from another. "Dick Slater and his 'Liberty Boys' strike hard when they do strike, and they strike whenever they see anything like a fair opportunity."

The youths rode out to within a quarter of a mile of the end of the right wing of the British army, and sat there on the backs of their horses, and watched the enemy closely, ready to attack, if any opportunity presented itself.

The redcoats had learned a lesson, however, and while they would have given much to have gotten a good chance at the "Liberty Boys," they did not dare make the attempt.

The youths got no further chance at the enemy that afternoon, and when evening came, they went back to the main encampment, and ate their suppers with a feeling of lively satisfaction in their hearts.

They had beaten the enemy, and were happy.

General Washington and his officers thought it possible that the British might try to make a night attack, in force, so a double line of sentinels was placed out, to make sure of discovering the enemy's approach in case it did make an attempt at attacking.

The night passed quietly, however. The British had evidently deemed it best not to try anything of the kind.

In truth the matter had been discussed by the British commander, General Howe, and his staff, but they had decided that it would not be a good plan to make an attack.

They were well aware of the fact that the enemy would be on its guard, and that it would be impossible to surprise it, and so they gave up the idea of making any attempt in that direction.

General Howe thought that in all probability the pa-

riot army would retreat to Philadelphia during the night, anyway, and he was willing to wait and give it a chance to do so.

But when daylight came, next morning, and it was light enough to see any distance, the encampment of the patriot army was seen to be right where it was the evening before.

"Jove, they seem determined to hold on until driven back," said General Howe, when this news was carried to him. "I did not suppose they would be so stubborn."

"Nor did I," replied Knyphausen, one of the staff officers.

"I have no doubt Washington has some purpose in doing so," said another officer. "He is pretty deep, and usually has some scheme afoot."

"Yes, that is true," agreed Howe. "But I don't see what possible good he can do his cause by stubbornly holding on and contesting the ground between here and Philadelphia."

He did not once think of Burgoyne, or that Washington's stubborn resistance to the advance of the British army could have any effect on the fortunes of the British army of the North, several hundred miles distant, which shows that he was far from being as great a general as Washington.

Soon after breakfast the two bodies of cavalry were out as on the day before, and also several small parties of infantry, and there were several small skirmishes during the day. Not liking this, General Howe made an advance with his entire army, and there was quite an engagement for an hour or so. Not wishing to risk being defeated and forced to retreat a long distance, General Washington retreated perhaps a mile, and again went into camp; but as his men contested every foot of the way, the British were willing to stop when they saw the patriots were going into camp for the night. They knew they could not do anything to amount to anything after nightfall.

The "Liberty Boys" had one or two lively skirmishes during the afternoon, and as usual came out first best.

The night passed quietly, but all were of the opinion that the next day would be a lively one.

CHAPTER VII.

DICK A PRISONER.

The next day was, as had been expected, a lively day. The "Liberty Boys" succeeded in striking another detached party of redcoats, and cut them practically to pieces, and this worked the British up to a terrible pitch.

"That fellow, Dick Slater, must be captured," said General Howe. "If he is not stopped he will be the cause of our losing a great many men, I fear."

"But how is his capture to be brought about?" asked one of the officers.

This was a poser.

It was hard to say how the capture of the brave "Liberty Boy" was to be effected.

As there was no immediate prospect of being able to capture Dick, General Howe gave orders that his men be very careful, and that no detached parties should give the enemy a chance to strike them.

There were a number of skirmishes during the day between parties of infantry, but not much damage was done.

General Washington fell back perhaps a mile, however, and again went into camp.

Next day the skirmishing went on with more vigor than on any day so far, and by noon it had become a general engagement between the two armies, and during the afternoon the patriot troops gradually fell back, until when evening came they were five miles nearer Philadelphia.

General Washington was well satisfied, however. He had made it rather a costly day's work for the enemy, as his men took advantage of all the protection afforded by trees, stones, etc., and fought on the defensive, thus forcing the redcoats to come out where they could be seen, and the British loss was vastly greater than that of the patriot army.

"We have done remarkably well, I think," he told his officers that evening. "If we can continue as we have been doing I believe that we will have detained Howe at least ten days on the road from Chester to Philadelphia."

"It seems reasonable to suppose that we shall be able to do as well during the ensuing days as in the past days," said General Greene.

And the other officers said the same.

On the next day there was a continuance of the engagement, and as on the day before, the patriot army fought on the defensive, and by taking advantage of the protection afforded by the trees, stones, etc., was enabled to do considerable damage to the enemy, and escape much damage to themselves.

They retreated nearly five miles, however, and went into camp on a sort of eminence.

That night the redcoats tried to steal a march on the patriot army.

About eleven o'clock they broke camp, and started to try to get around the patriots.

They went to the right, and made a wide detour, in order to make sure that their movements would not be discovered. This took them into the deep woods of the Delaware river, and they got all mixed up, and were forced to stop at last, and go into camp.

General Howe and his staff took up their quarters in a large mansion, which they unexpectedly came upon, close to the river, in a large clearing. It was the home of a wealthy Tory, who gave them a hearty welcome.

When they asked him if it would be possible for the army to march onward through the timber in the darkness, and reach Philadelphia, he said he feared it would be a difficult matter.

"The chances are that you will lose your way, and not

make much headway," he said. "I should advise that you remain here, until morning, and then resume the march. You should be able to get past the rebel army by so doing, I should think."

General Howe decided to act upon this advice, and the army went into camp.

Next morning, when the patriots discovered that the redcoats had disappeared, scouts were sent out, and it did not take long to locate the enemy in the heavy woods bordering the Delaware river.

The patriot army moved hastily, and took up its position in front of the British, and thus was ready to contest every foot of the ground.

"It is only a mile to the open country, to the westward," said Robert Royal, the Tory. "I should think it would be your best plan, now that the rebels have got in front of you, to move westward, to the open ground, and then advance."

"That will be best," agreed General Howe, and he gave the necessary orders.

The patriot soldiers soon discovered that the British were about, and hastened to get ahead of them as much as was possible. There was quite a good deal of skirmishing and sharp-shooting, but finally the British army succeeded in reaching the open country.

Then the engagement became more lively, and continued throughout the rest of the day. The patriots held the redcoats back pretty well, however, and an advance of only about three miles was scored.

After supper that evening Dick Slater left the encampment and made his way in the direction of the home of Wilson Metcalf, the patriot. He wished to see how the patriots were getting along, and whether or not they had been bothered by the British. Also he wished to learn how the wounded British spy, Ralph Winchester, was.

The "Liberty Boy" was not more than three-quarters of an hour in reaching the patriot's home, and he was given a pleasant greeting by Mr. Metcalf and his wife, and their daughter Jennie.

"I am glad to know that you are alive and well, Mr. Slater," said Mr. Metcalf.

"Thank you," said Dick. "How is your patient, the British spy, getting along?"

"He is much better. Will you go up and see him?"

"Yes, I guess I might as well do so."

The youth accompanied Mr. Metcalf upstairs to the room occupied by the wounded spy, and found the man looking much better.

"Ah, it's you, is it?" said Winchester, frowning.

"Yes, it is me," replied Dick.

"Well, what do you want here?" The redcoat's tone was gruff and surly.

"I just wished to see how you were getting along."

"Thinking of carrying me off to your army, a prisoner, I suppose?"

"No, I guess you are hardly strong enough to be moved," was the quiet reply.

At this moment there was the patter of footsteps in the hall, and Jennie Metcalf appeared at the door. She looked excited and frightened, and beckoned to her father and Dick.

They moved to the door, and out into the hall, followed by the wondering look of Winchester's eyes.

"What is it, Jennie?" her father asked.

"The British!" the girl almost gasped. "They are downstairs. Captain Shannon and a score of men are there."

"I must get away from here in a hurry, then!" exclaimed Dick, and he ran to the end of the hall and raised the window.

Climbing through, he slid down the sloping roof of the shed-room, and dropped to the ground—to feel himself seized by a dozen hands.

He struggled fiercely, but to no avail; the odds were too strong against him, and he was soon overpowered, and his wrists were tied together behind his back.

Then his captors led him around the house to the front door, and into the building.

Captain Shannon and a number of his men were just coming downstairs, they having gone up to the room occupied by the wounded redcoat, and when the captain saw Dick a prisoner in the hands of his men, he gave vent to a cry of delight.

"So you got him, did you, boys?" he exclaimed. "Winchester just told me Dick Slater had been in his room a few minutes ago, and I was coming to tell you to watch carefully. How did you manage to capture him?"

"He climbed down through the window and slid down the shed-roof right into our arms," replied one, "so all we had to do was to nab him."

"Good! We have done a good night's work, for I know that General Howe would rather have Dick Slater a prisoner than any two or three of the other minor officers."

"How do you know I am Dick Slater?" asked the "Liberty Boy." "You never saw me before."

"I know I never have; but I have heard a very minute description of you, and you fit the description exactly, so I am willing to wager a month's pay that you are Dick Slater."

"You might lose your money."

"I would not be afraid of doing so. Anyway, I am going to take you to camp, and to General Howe. He knows you well by sight, and will recognize you at once."

"If I am Dick Slater."

"Oh, there is not the least doubt in my mind as to that."

"That may be; but sure things are sometimes uncertain."

"Bah! This is one of the sure things that will not be uncertain." Then he turned to Mr. Metcalf, who had followed him downstairs, and pointing his finger at the patriot settler, said sternly:

"I thought you took the oath of allegiance to the king?"

"I did," was the calm reply.

"And yet I find you harboring a rebel the very first time I come to your house."

The patriot shook his head.

"I was not harboring him," he said.

"I would like to know what you would call it, then?"

"He came here to see how the wounded man was getting along; I simply went upstairs with him, and was not harboring him at all."

"Well, I must say it looks suspicious."

"What would you have had me do?"

"You should have made a prisoner of him."

The settler smiled.

"If he is Dick Slater, as you seem to be sure he is, what chance would I have stood with him if I had tried to make a prisoner of him?"

"You might not have succeeded. But you could at least have tried to capture him."

"He might have tried to do so if you had not put in an appearance so quickly," said Dick, who fancied he understood the affair, and wished to help Mr. Metcalf out. "He was not harboring me, I assure you."

"Oh, of course you would say so," said Captain Shannon.

Said Mr. Metcalf: "I have been so busy taking care of the wounded man upstairs that I have had no opportunity or time to do anything else."

"Well, we will let the matter pass for this time," was the reply. "But you had best be careful, sir. Remember, you are a loyalist now, and the penalty of treason is death."

"I well know that, captain," was the quiet reply. "There is no necessity of threatening me."

"I hope there is not."

The redcoats did not remain much longer at the Metcalf home. They had made what they believed to be an important capture, and were eager to get back to their encampment with their prisoner. The leader, Captain Shannon, spent perhaps fifteen minutes talking to the wounded man upstairs, and then the entire party of perhaps thirty men, with Dick in its midst, took its departure. It was a foraging party, that had gone out to secure provisions from the larders of the farmers of the vicinity, and while in the neighborhood of the Metcalf home, Captain Shannon had decided to call there and see how Winchester was getting along. It was thus that Dick Slater had been captured—more the result of accident than otherwise.

CHAPTER VIII.

A BRAVE GIRL.

Captain Shannon was greatly elated over his capture of the patriot, who, he was sure, was the famous Dick Slater.

He well knew that General Howe would be delighted if Dick Slater had been captured, and he felt sure of promo-

tion, and also of receiving the five hundred pounds reward which was offered for the "Liberty Boy's" capture.

As soon as the encampment was reached, Dick was taken to the tent occupied by the British general.

He was up yet, and when the captain and two of his men entered, with Dick a prisoner, General Howe leaped to his feet and gave utterance to an exclamation of delight.

"Dick Slater, by all that is wonderful!" he cried.

"Ha! I thought so!" exclaimed Captain Shannon, turning a triumphant gaze upon Dick's face. "I told you the commander-in-chief would recognize you."

The "Liberty Boy" smiled.

"I knew he would," was the reply. "But I didn't wish to help make you feel happy."

"Where did you capture him, captain?" asked General Howe.

"At the home of a settler named Metcalf. You know, that is where Winchester lies wounded."

"Ah, yes; I remember."

Then Howe turned to Dick.

"So we have you a prisoner at last, Dick Slater," he said, rubbing his hands with satisfaction.

"It certainly looks that way, General Howe," was the cool reply.

"Yes, we have you a prisoner, and without its head, the company of "Liberty Boys," as you call yourselves, will not be able to do much. It will lose its effectiveness at once."

"Don't be too sure of that, sir."

"But I am sure of it. Without you they will be not at all dangerous."

"That is where you make a great mistake; there are at least a dozen youths in my company who are capable of commanding the 'Liberty Boys,' and getting as good work out of them as I can get."

"I don't believe it."

"It is true, nevertheless; and by capturing me you will have made them very angry, and they will exert themselves strenuously to do you damage, to get revenge for my capture."

"Let them. I have no fears of them now, for I consider that their sting has been extracted. With you to lead them, I confess that they worry me, for they seem to be always in the right place, and ready to leap upon any detached or exposed portion of my army."

"It will be the same with me a prisoner in your midst, sir. You have gained nothing by capturing me."

"Oh, yes, I have. Even if what you state is true, with regard to the 'Liberty Boys' being still as dangerous as ever, why, in you I have secured the champion rebel spy of the Revolution, and I fancy that General Washington will miss you when he wants some dangerous spy work done."

"There are others among my 'Liberty Boys' as capable of doing as good spy work as myself, sir."

"I don't believe it. Of course you would say so, but I am confident it is not the case."

"You will soon learn that I have spoken only the truth."

"You could not make me believe that in a hundred

years." Then the general turned to the captain, and said: "Captain Shannon, I congratulate you on your important capture."

"I am glad if you are pleased, your excellency," said the officer.

"I am pleased, indeed, more than pleased. I am delighted. I shall recommend you for promotion at the earliest possible moment; and, too, you shall receive the five hundred pounds reward that has long been offered for this young man's capture."

"Thank you, sir. Thank you."

"Don't mention it. You have earned promotion and the reward, for you have made a most important capture, and one which I have long wished might be made."

Then he ordered that the prisoner be taken to the most secure place in the encampment and confined.

"Place a strong guard," he added, "and whatever happens, captain, see to it that the prisoner does not escape."

"I will see to it, your excellency."

Then the captain and his two men left the tent, taking Dick with them.

It had become known throughout the encampment that the famous rebel spy, Dick Slater, had been captured, and he was the cynosure of all eyes as he was led along.

Some of the redcoats jeered at Dick, and made insulting remarks, but he paid no attention to this.

"Hello, Dick Slater," called out one. "You have got to the end of the rope, haven't you?"

"No," laughed another coarsely, "he will be at the end of the rope to-morrow."

"That's so—when he is swung up to a limb—ha, ha, ha!"

"There is one 'Liberty Boy' who is not at liberty, fellows!" laughed another.

"He'd like to be, though—ha, ha, ha!"

"Say, Shannon, you are in luck."

"You have done a good night's work."

"You always were lucky."

"You'll be promoted, old man."

Such were some of the remarks made by the soldiers, and Captain Shannon was indeed proud of his share of the attention which they were given, and he walked erect and with a proud air, indeed.

The "Liberty Boy" was placed in a small tent, and a guard of four soldiers was placed around it.

"It will be impossible for you to escape, Dick Slater," said Captain Shannon, just as he was leaving the tent, "so you might as well make up your mind on that, and take it easy."

"Don't worry about me, Captain Shannon," was Dick's reply. "I will get along all right."

The officer went out and cautioned the guards.

"Look into the tent every hour, at least," he said. "And make sure the prisoner is there, and that his hands are bound; and if he should attempt to escape, shoot him rather than permit him to get away."

The sentinels said they would do so, and the captain strode away to get to some rest, and dream of promotion.

"Oh, father, isn't it too bad, the capture of Dick Slater," said Jennie Metcalf, when the redcoats had departed with Dick in their midst.

"Indeed, it is, Jennie," was the reply.

"Father, can't we do something for him?"

The man shook his head dubiously.

"What could we do?" he asked.

"Oh, dear, I hardly know," was the reply, in a tone of distress; and then suddenly she brightened up.

"Yes, I do know what we can do, father," she cried eagerly.

"What, Jennie?"

"We can go to the patriot encampment and tell the 'Liberty Boys' that their commander has been captured."

Mr. Metcalf started.

"Of course," he said. "I don't see why I didn't think of that at once. I was thinking of trying to rescue Dick Slater, and of course there would be little chance of making a success of that."

"We could do nothing toward it, father; but if we hasten to inform the 'Liberty Boys' of Dick Slater's capture they may be able to effect his rescue in some manner."

"True; and they must be informed at the earliest possible moment."

"So they must. Say, father, let me go and tell them."

Mr. Metcalf looked dubiously at his daughter, and hesitated.

"I am afraid to let you go that distance through the timber at night, and alone—and in such times as these, Jennie," he said.

"I know the way, father," said the brave girl. "I shall have no difficulty in finding my way to the patriot encampment, and I will take my rifle, and if anyone or any animal attempts to attack me I will shoot."

Mr. Metcalf turned to his wife, who had not yet said anything.

"What do you say, Mary?" he asked. "Which would you prefer—that I go, and leave you two alone here, or that Jennie go, and I remain here with you?"

The woman hesitated for a few moments, and then said:

"We would be afraid if left here, Wilson, and as Jennie knows the way to the patriot encampment, and has been out of nights frequently, I think it will be safe to let her go."

"Very well, then. That settles it. You may go, Jennie; but be careful, daughter—be very careful."

"I will, father."

The girl was eager and excited, but she was delighted as well, and she made haste to get ready for her journey.

She was not long doing this, for the weather was warm, and she did not need to hunt for wraps; about all she had to do was to get her rifle and ammunition, and look to the weapon, to see that it was loaded and primed.

Then she kissed her father and mother, bade them good-bye, and took her departure.

"I hope nothing will happen to her," said Mrs. Metcalf. "It is a dark, lonesome night."

"I think she will be safe enough, wife," was the reply.

"Jenny is skilled in woodcraft, and could easily evade any redcoats that might be encountered in the timber."

"True. Well, I will try not to be uneasy."

"That is the way to talk, wife. Don't worry. Likely Jennie will be back within two hours or so, safe and sound."

"I hope so; I pray so."

Meanwhile Jennie was walking as rapidly as possible through the timber in the direction of the patriot encampment.

It was cloudy, and quite dark, the gloom being very thick under the trees, and this made it necessary that the girl should go rather slowly and carefully.

She was not afraid of losing her way, however. She was too skillful in woodcraft for that. She knew that moss grew on the north side of the trees, where the sunshine never penetrated, and when she became slightly uncertain about the direction, all she had to do was to feel at the root of a tree, and locate the moss.

In this way she made her way unerringly in the direction of the patriot encampment.

She had been perhaps an hour on the way, when she caught sight of the light from campfires.

"I am close to the encampment!" she said to herself. "Good! my journey is almost at an end."

The next moment a sharp, warning voice cried out:

"Halt! Who comes there?"

CHAPTER X.

JENNIE AND THE "LIBERTY BOYS."

Jennie was startled at first, but quickly realized that it was the voice of a patriot sentinel, and she regained her equanimity, and replied, in as firm a voice as she could command:

"I am a friend."

"Advance, friend, and give the countersign," was the reply.

The girl advanced, and was soon close to where the sentinel stood. She could see his form outlined against the background of firelight, but felt sure it was not possible that he could see her.

"Stop!" again commanded the sentinel. "I judge, from your voice, that you are a girl or woman. Am I right?"

"You are," was the reply. "I am a girl—a patriot, and I have come to bring you some information."

"What is the information about?"

"About Dick Slater."

"What!" cried the sentinel, excitedly. "What about Dick Slater? I am a 'Liberty Boy.' Tell me, has anything happened to him?"

"Yes. He is a prisoner!"

"A prisoner? To whom?"

"The British."

"Is that indeed true? Who are you, miss?"

"I am Jennie Metcalf, and it was at my home that he was captured."

"Oh, yes, I know. Your home is where the wounded British spy is, is it not?"

"Yes."

"I remember, now, that Dick said the name of the folks where the British spy was, and where he intended going to-night, was Metcalf."

"You are right, sir."

"And the redcoats came there and captured Dick, you say?"

"Yes."

"How long ago?"

"Over an hour ago. I came here as quickly as I could, and have been an hour on the way, I should judge."

"How many redcoats were there?"

"About thirty."

"Well, that doesn't matter, anyway, for they have had time to reach the encampment."

"Yes, for it is as close to our house as is our encampment."

"So I supposed. Well, I will call the officer of the guard, and when he comes I will tell him to show you to Bob Estabrook, who is in command when Dick is away, and who will know what to do."

"Thank you."

The "Liberty Boy" summoned the officer of the guard, and explained who the girl was, and what she wanted, and the officer conducted Jennie to the point where the company of "Liberty Boys" were quartered.

The officer called Bob, who hastened to approach, and when he saw the visitor was a beautiful maiden he bowed courteously, and said respectfully:

"Ah, miss, what can I do for you?"

"I have come to tell you that your commander, Dick Slater, has been captured by the redcoats, sir," was the reply.

"What!" exclaimed Bob, in surprise and horror. "Dick a prisoner?"

The youths all leaped to their feet, and crowded around the girl, looking eager and anxious, and a volley of questions and exclamations were given utterance to.

"Hush, fellows," said Bob. "Now go ahead and tell us about it, miss."

Jennie did so, and when she had finished the youths stared at one another with blank looks on their faces.

Dick a prisoner! It was terrible to think of. They loved their brave young commander, and at once they began talking of trying to rescue him.

"We must rescue him, fellows!" said Fred Hardy, a handsome youth, and one of the jolliest ones in the company.

Bob Estabrook asked Jennie a number of questions, and she answered them promptly, and told the youths her name, and where she lived.

"It was brave of you to come so far through the tim-

ber and darkness to tell us of Dick's capture, Miss Jennie," said Bob.

"So it was!" said Fred Hardy, with such an admiring look into the girl's eyes that she blushed rosily.

"I was glad to do it," she said. "You see, I am a patriot girl, and am glad to do anything I can for a patriot soldier."

Then she said she had six brothers in the patriot army, and asked the youths if they knew anything about them.

"They were with the army before the battle of the Brandywine," she said, "and I have not heard from them since, or of them. And now the army has been in these parts several days, and not one of my brothers has been home, or sent word where they are, and we have become very uneasy; and if you can give me any information regarding my brothers, please do so."

"Say, I knew one of the Metcalf boys!" suddenly exclaimed Fred Hardy. "His name was Frank. He was a tall, well-built fellow, about twenty-two years old, with dark hair and eyes, and a mustache."

"That was my brother!" cried Jennie. "That was my brother Frank. Oh, do you know where he is now?"

"Yes. The company he was with was sent away on some sort of an expedition over into New Jersey, the day after the battle of Brandywine, Miss Jennie."

"Then all my brothers went, for they belonged to the same company."

"Yes; they would have to go if they belonged to that company," said Bob.

"Then they are probably safe," said Jennie, her eyes sparkling with joy. "Oh, I am so glad that you have told me this! It will be joyous news to father and mother, for they feared all my brothers had been killed in the battle of the Brandywine."

"Of course I cannot say whether or not one or more of the other five were killed or wounded, Miss Jennie," said Fred. "But I know that Frank was neither killed nor wounded; and he seemed to be in good spirits when I saw him—which would scarcely have been the case if one or more of his brothers had been killed."

"True; oh, I am so happy!" cried Jennie. "I am sorry Mr. Slater was captured, but am glad that my coming has resulted in my gaining this information about my brothers."

"Why did not your father come to our army and make inquiries about his sons?" asked Bob.

"He did not dare, owing to the fact that redcoat spies were watching our house all the time," was the reply. "He did intend to do so; but when he saw the house was being watched he was afraid to risk it, as he did not wish to get himself arrested, and leave mother and I without protection. You see, it would have done my brothers no good for us to find out about them, and although it was hard to endure the suspense, we thought it best to do so, under the circumstances."

"Yes, indeed," agreed Bob. "Well, I have no doubt that your brothers are alive and well."

Then the "Liberty Boys" resumed the discussion regarding the matter of rescuing Dick.

They well knew it would be a most difficult matter to save the "Liberty Boy." They were aware of the fact that there was a price of five hundred pounds on Dick's head, and that for this reason he would be guarded closely.

While they were talking a "Liberty Boy" who had been out on a scouting and spying expedition in the direction of the right wing of the British encampment, came up, and when he heard that Dick had been captured he, as the rest had done, expressed great sorrow.

"We are figuring on trying to rescue Dick," explained Bob. "But I doubt if such a thing could be done. He is too important a prisoner, and will be guarded too closely."

Suddenly the youth who had been out, reconnoitering and scouting, gave utterance to an exclamation, and slapped his thigh in delight.

"I'll tell you what we may be able to do," he said. "I have my doubt about being able to rescue Dick, but there is another thing we can do, I feel certain, that will do just as well."

"What is it, Mark?" asked Bob, eagerly. The youth's name was Mark Morrison.

"I'll tell you. I have been over between the river and the British encampment, and just before I came back, I saw a British officer in major's uniform, accompanied by a bodyguard of ten soldiers, go to the home of a rich Tory who lives in that large mansion—you know where it is."

"Yes," from Bob. "I know the Tory's name—Robert Royal."

"That's it. Well, this officer went there, just before I started back to camp, and the chances are that he will remain some time, as there is little doubt that he will be treated to some good wine, and—"

"I know what you are thinking of, Mark," cried Bob. "You are figuring on capturing the British officer, and then exchanging with the redcoats for Dick. Is that it?"

"Yes, Bob."

"It's a good scheme, and I believe it will work."

"I think so. We cannot rescue Dick, in all probability, but by the exercise of cunning, in capturing the British officer, we may be able to secure his release, and it will amount to the same thing."

"Yes, indeed. And I hope that we may be enabled to make a success of the affair. The British think they have done something wonderful in capturing Dick, and I would like to outwit them by capturing one of their officers and forcing them to exchange."

"We can do it, I am sure, if we can get to Robert Royal's mansion before the officer takes his leave."

"Well, we will start at once, and will move as rapidly as possible. We should be able to get there in less than an hour."

"Oh, yes. But how many men will we take, Bob?"

"A dozen should be enough."

"I guess that will be sufficient."

Bob selected eleven of the youths, and then, turning to Jennie Metcalf, thanked her for bringing the information regarding Dick's capture.

"And now I suppose you wish to return to your home?" he asked in conclusion.

"I would like to ask General Washington about my brothers, first," was the reply.

"All right. Fred," to Fred Hardy, "you go to headquarters' tent with Miss Jennie, and get her an audience with the commander-in-chief; when she has had her interview, tell General Washington what I have set out to do. There is no time to lose, and he will not be angry with us for going ahead with this, I know, for he thinks everything of Dick."

"All right. I'll do as you say, Bob," said Fred, and he and Jennie set out for General Washington's tent, while Bob and his eleven comrades set out through the timber in the direction of the mansion of the Tory, Robert Royal.

In three quarters of an hour of the time of leaving the patriot encampment the youths reached the vicinity of the mansion, and then, knowing the officer had a bodyguard of ten men, they advanced cautiously.

"We must be careful, and not make any mistake," said Bob. "Come along, boys, and move as silently as shadows."

The youths stole toward the house.

CHAPTER X.

THE "LIBERTY BOYS" AT WORK.

The patriots stole onward, and presently reached the rear of the mansion without having seen anything of the ten British soldiers. They began to fear that the officer they had come to capture had gone, but suddenly they heard loud voices and laughter coming from the kitchen, and instantly understood the matter.

While the officer was in the library talking and drinking wine with the owner of the mansion the common soldiers were in the kitchen, drinking and eating and having a good time.

The question now was, how were they to get into the mansion?

After some discussion it was decided to play a cunning trick on the redcoats who were in the kitchen. No sooner thought of than put into execution.

The youths ranged themselves along near the kitchen-door, and Bob took off his hat and coat and stepped to the door and knocked on it.

There was a sudden cessation of the talk and laughter.

Then steps were heard, and the door opened a few inches.

It was one of the soldiers.

"The major wants five of you to come out here, at once," said Bob.

"What for?" was the query.

"He fears that some of the rebels are around."

"Who are you?"

"One of the men who work on the place."

The redcoat grumbly turned around and called the names of four of his comrades.

"Come along," he said. "We'll go out and take a look around, and then come back. Don't eat and drink everything up while we are gone, boys."

"We won't."

Then the door opened and five British soldiers filed out. The last one of the five pulled the door shut behind him, and the instant he did so the twelve "Liberty Boys" leaped forward and seized the redcoats.

The five were taken wholly by surprise, and although they struggled it did them no good. Neither could they yell out, for the "Liberty Boys" had been very careful to get a throat-hold on each of the enemy, and thus guarded against their giving vent to cries that would alarm their comrades.

It did not take long to bind and gag the five, and they were then dragged around the corner of the house and left there, while their captors returned to the kitchen door, ready to finish their work.

Again Bob knocked, and again a redcoat came and opened the door.

"What's wanted now?" the man asked, gruffly, for he did not wish to be bothered when he was enjoying himself.

"Your comrades say they think there are rebels close at hand," said Dick. "And they sent me to tell you to come out and help them reconnoiter, and perhaps fight."

"We have to go, too, fellows," said the redcoat to his comrades. "Come along."

There was a shuffling of feet, and the five redcoats came grumbly forth from the kitchen. Coming out of the lighted room into the night they could not see anything, and were easy prey for the "Liberty Boys."

The instant the last one of the five closed the door the youths leaped upon the redcoats, and speedily made prisoners of them, and bound and gagged them.

Then they dragged the five around the corner of the house and placed them alongside the others.

"Now, come on, boys," said Bob. "We will go into the house and see if we can find and make a prisoner of the officer. He is the man we want, for we will be able to get Dick back in exchange for him, where the enemy would refuse to exchange for a dozen ordinary soldiers."

They went back to the rear, and Bob opened the kitchen door and entered the room.

There was no one there. Evidently the redcoats had been helping themselves.

The "Liberty Boys" did not all enter the house. Bob felt that this was unnecessary, and that at least half their number could do better work by remaining out of doors and keeping watch for the possible approach of enemies.

So six of the youths remained outside, and scattered out, so as to enable them to watch in all directions, while the

other six entered the house to make a prisoner of the British officer.

Bob and his five comrades made their way out of the kitchen into a hall. They moved along this hall, and listened at all the doors, but did not hear the sound of voices in any on the ground floor.

"They must be upstairs," whispered Bob, and he led the way up the stairs.

It was pretty dark, but by feeling their way along, they had not much difficulty in knowing which way to go.

Presently they saw a streak of light shining under a door a little ways ahead of them, and as they drew near the door they heard voices.

"I think we have found our game," whispered Bob to Mark, and that youth replied:

"You are right."

They paused in front of the door and listened.

The voices of at least two men were heard, and to the surprise of the youths they heard the voice of a girl or woman.

The "Liberty Boys" felt that they had no time to spare, however, and without waiting to hear anything that was said, they threw the door open, and entered the room quickly and unceremoniously.

Standing with their backs to the "Liberty Boys" as the youths entered were two men. One was a British officer, the other a portly, important-looking man—evidently this was Robert Royal, the Tory owner of the mansion.

Facing the two men, and facing the "Liberty Boys," also, was a beautiful young woman of perhaps twenty years of age.

As the youths entered they drew their pistols and extended the weapons, covering the two men, and as the young woman saw this move on the part of the "Liberty Boys," a cry of delight escaped her lips, and extending her arms toward the newcomers, she cried:

"Save me, oh, save me from this terrible man!"

Of course the Tory and the officer whirled, instantly, and when they saw themselves threatened by the pistols of the six "Liberty Boys," they recoiled.

"W-what does t-this m-mean?" stammered Robert Royal, with a feeble attempt to be dignified and stern.

"It means that you two scoundrels have got to the end of your rope!" was Bob's ringing reply. "Don't attempt to draw weapons, or to get away, for if you do we will kill you with as little compunction as if you were mad dogs."

Then, leaving his five comrades to watch and threaten the two men, Bob turned toward the young woman.

"What is the meaning of this, miss?" he asked. "Why do you ask us to save you? What have the scoundrels been doing?"

"That man, there, Robert Royal," pointing, "has been holding me here a prisoner for a week, and he has been trying to force me to agree to become his wife."

"Oh, the villain," cried Bob. "Well, we will put a stop to that, lady. We will take you away from here to where the scoundrel cannot bother you any more."

"Thank heaven!" cried the girl.

Bob turned upon the two frightened men, and shaking his pistol in the face of Robert Royal, said sternly:

"You cowardly, sneaking old reprobate! Do you know what I have a great notion of doing?"

"N-no," was the reply, the florid face of the man growing perceptibly paler.

"Then I'll tell you. I have a good notion to blow the whole top of your head off."

Bob's voice was so grim and stern, and sounded so much in earnest that the Tory was fearful that he was to be killed.

"D-don't shoot! d-don't shoot!" he cried, tremblingly. "I'll promise to not bother the young woman any more, if only you'll let me go this time. P-please d-don't shoot!"

"I'll leave it for you to say, miss," said Bob. "If you say spare him I'll do it, but if you say kill the villain, I'll put a bullet through him without any hesitancy whatever."

"Oh, Miss Helen, d-don't tell h-him to shoot m-me!" cried the cowardly Tory. "I swear to y-you that I'll never t-try to bother y-you again, if you'll only b-be easy on m-me this t-time."

"Will you keep your oath, Robert Royal?" the young woman asked, sternly.

"Y-yes! I swear t-that I will."

"Very well, then. Your life shall be spared, this time. You need not shoot him, sir," this last to Bob.

"Very well; just as you say, miss," replied Bob. "But such reptiles are better out of the world than in it. They are not to be trusted."

"I'll keep my word," said the Tory, who was badly frightened.

"You will do well to do so," declared Bob sternly. "And now, miss, what is your name?"

"Helen Bundy, sir."

"Do you live near here?"

"Within three miles, sir."

"And you wish to go with us when we go?"

"I would like to."

"Yes, yes. You shall go with us—and we are going very shortly."

Then he turned toward the Tory and the British officer.

"Turn your backs toward us," he ordered.

They obeyed, though with evident reluctance.

"Now place your hands together behind your backs."

As the British officer—whose uniform was that of a major—placed his hands behind him, he suddenly gave vent to a loud cry of "Help! Help!"

"Shut up!" ordered Bob. "That will do you no good, you fool. Your men are all tied up, tight and fast. Do you suppose we don't understand our business?"

"My—men—tied up—tight and fast?" stammered the officer.

"Yes. I have a lot more men downstairs, and the first thing we did was make prisoners of your bodyguard. So keep quiet. It will do you no good to yell."

A groan escaped the officer's lips. He realized that if this was true he was in for it.

"Who are you young men, anyway?" he asked, as the "Liberty Boys" were tying his and his Tory friend's wrists.

"Who are we?" asked Bob. "I'll ask you a question. Have you ever heard of 'The Liberty Boys of '76'?"

"The Liberty Boys of '76'!" exclaimed the officer. "Heavens! is that who you are?"

"It is."

"Then I am in for it, I doubt not."

"You certainly are, major," replied Bob, quietly.

At this instant footsteps were heard in the hall, and the next moment one of the "Liberty Boys" who had been left outside the house appeared at the door of the room.

He looked excited, and was panting, but managed to gasp out:

"Quite a large party of redcoats is close at hand, Bob. The house is almost surrounded."

CHAPTER XI.

THE ESCAPE.

"Ha! good!" cried the British officer, his face undergoing a sudden change, from deepest gloom to strong delight. "Now we will see about this matter, my bold 'Liberty Boys'!"

"So we shall," said Bob, grimly. Then to his comrades he cried, earnestly:

"Tie the Tory's legs, and throw him over there in the corner. Gag the major."

This was quickly done, so far as the work relating to the Tory was concerned, but the officer leaped around and yelled at the top of his voice, and in order to stop this Bob dealt him a blow on the head with his pistol-butt.

The major sank unconscious to the floor.

"I had to do it," said Bob. "Now lift him up, four of you boys, and bring him along. We must take him, no matter what happens."

"I fear we shall be unable to carry him away with us, Bob," said the youth who had brought the news of the presence of a British force in the vicinity. "The house is pretty nearly surrounded, and we could not carry him, and get through the redcoat lines."

"We must try, anyway. Hurry, boys. We must get out of the house and away as quickly as possible."

"We will have to go out the front way, and go toward the river," the other youth said. "That is about the only side that is open."

"All right. Go out that way, then. Come, Miss Bundy."

The young woman accompanied Bob, and they followed close upon the heels of the youths who were carrying the unconscious officer.

Downstairs they went, and unbolting and opening the front door they passed out into the front yard. As they did so the other five "Liberty Boys" joined them.

"Our only chance to escape is by going toward the river," said one to Bob. "The redcoats have practically surrounded the place on all the other sides."

"I suppose they think we cannot escape in this direction on account of the river," was Bob's reply.

"Likely that is it."

The little party hastened down to the river, and here they found a boat-house, but could see nothing of any boat.

"If we had a boat," said Bob, "we could place the prisoner in it, and Miss Bundy could take her place in it, and a couple of us could go in the boat, and do the rowing, while the rest could take to the water and swim up the river and escape."

"Let's enter the boat-house, Bob," said Mark Morrison. "Perhaps there is a boat inside."

They tried the door, and found it unlocked. Opening it, they entered. All was dark within, and they could not see anything.

They moved about, as rapidly as was possible, however, and felt around, in the hope of finding a boat, but were disappointed.

While thus engaged, they heard loud yells from the direction of the house.

"The redcoats have entered the house, and found the Tory tied up like a turkey for market," said Bob.

"Yes, and likely they have found the ten soldiers that we left lying beside the house," said Mark.

"They'll be down here in a jiffy."

Suddenly an exclamation escaped the lips of one of the youths who had been feeling around in the hope of finding a boat.

"I've found a trap-door!" he exclaimed; and then he lifted by the iron ring, which he had accidentally found in the floor, and up came the trap-door.

Bob was by his side in a jiffy.

"There is a flight of steps, here!" he cried. "And the chances are that there is a boat below. The boat-house is built very high."

He quickly felt his way down the steps, and the next moment a cry of delight came up to those above.

"Here's a boat!" were Bob's words; and then, just at that moment, the moon shone out, and illumined the water in under the boat-house, showing the boat plainly.

"You come first, Miss Bundy," said Bob. "Then two of you carry the officer down."

The girl came quickly down the steps, and stepping into the boat took a seat in the prow. Then Mark and another of the youths lifted the unconscious form of the officer.

The "Liberty Boys" carried the prisoner down the steps and placed him in the boat. The capture had been cunningly-conceived and well-executed.

True, the "Liberty Boys" were not, figuratively speaking, out of the timber yet, but they were confident that they would succeed in making their escape.

"Two more of you boys get in the boat," ordered Bob. "The rest will have to swim for it. All come down the steps, and close the trap-door as you come."

The "Liberty Boys" hastened to obey, their movements being accelerated by the sound of footsteps outside the boat-house.

"They are coming, Bob," said one of the youths. "Push off, quickly, and get away, or you may yet be captured."

Two of the youths had climbed in, and taken seats in the stern, and this left seven of the boys who would have to swim for it. They did not mind, however, as all were expert swimmers, and they pushed the boat out into the stream, from under the boathouse.

As they did so the moon again went under some clouds, and the scene was bathed in darkness. This was just what the youths wanted, for it would make it impossible for the redcoats to do more than fire out into the stream at random, and the chances would be very small, indeed, for them to do any damage.

Without losing a moment's time, the seven "Liberty Boys" let themselves down into the water, being careful to make no noise, and they swam out from under the boathouse just as the trap door was lifted, and a man with a lantern was revealed standing there.

Fortunately the "Liberty Boys" were outside the bounds covered by the light from the lantern, and were not seen.

The man with the lantern hastened down the steps, and flashed the light around, however, and suddenly a cry escaped his lips.

"I saw one of the rebels!" he yelled. "They have taken to the water, and they have stolen the boat."

"Then they will escape," cried a captain, who had followed the man with the lantern.

As he spoke he drew a pistol and fired out into the river.

No cry came to their hearing after the shot, and they had little doubt that the bullet had done no damage.

"Is there no other boat here?" asked the officer.

"No, we had but the one boat."

"Then they will escape," in a tone of bitter disappointment. "And they have taken Major Milton with them, a prisoner!"

"Perhaps you may be able to capture them, captain," said one of the soldiers who stood at the top of the steps. "You know the man of the house said that there were ten or a dozen of the rebels, and all could not get in the boat. Some of them are swimming, and they will not be able to swim fast or far. All we will have to do will be to string out along the shore, and when they attempt to land we will nab them."

"That's right. We may be able to capture the swimmers! but those in the boat will be able to make their escape, without a doubt, and they are the more important ones."

However, going on the theory that half a loaf is better than none, the captain gave the order for the men to do as suggested by the soldier.

There was a force of thirty men, and they hastened up the river, keeping along the shore, and at intervals of perhaps two hundred yards soldiers were dropped out of the party, and remained stationary, to watch for the coming of the swimmers.

But the redcoats made some mistake in their calculations, for they waited two hours or more, and watched closely, and saw nothing of the "rebels." Disappointed and disgusted at last, by their non-success, they made their way back to the mansion of the Tory, Robert Royal.

That worthy was now liberated and having regained consciousness, was pacing back and forth on the piazza, fuming at a great rate. It is doubtful if ever there was an angrier or more disappointed man when the redcoats put in an appearance and told him the "rebels" had succeeded in getting away in safety.

"You don't mean to tell me they have escaped?" the Tory cried.

"Yes," was the reply. "They got away, though how they managed to do so is more than I can understand."

"And they have taken Major Milton a prisoner?" half-gasped the Tory.

"Yes; they have him, sure enough."

"That is terrible. It will be a severe blow, and General Howe will be very angry when he hears of it."

"No doubt, but it can't be helped."

"No; you have done all you can, I suppose."

"Yes, so we have."

"By the way, how happened you to come here when you did, anyway, captain?"

"I'll tell you. A scout, who was out reconnoitering, saw this party of rebels making their way through the timber, and as they were making their way in the direction of your house he made up his mind that they were coming here to plunder you of your valuables, and perhaps to set fire to your house."

"Ah, I see."

"Having so decided, he hastened back to our encampment, and reported to General Howe, who sent me with twenty men to try to capture them."

"Exactly."

"We got here too late to save Major Milton from being carried away a prisoner, but were in time to put a stop to their plundering, if such was their intention, for they did not do any of that, did they?"

"No; they were forced to leave in a hurry."

"If we had entered the house immediately, instead of stopping to free the members of the major's body-guard, whom we found lying by the side of the house, bound hand and foot, we might have got here in time to capture the rebels before they could have gotten out of the house; but we stopped, and lost considerable time, and it cannot be helped now."

"True. Well, what will you do now, captain?"

"I will return to the encampment and report the capture of Major Milton to General Howe."

"That will be the best thing to do, I judge. The commander-in-chief will wish to know it as quickly as possible."

"Yes."

Then the captain ordered his men to come with him, and bidding the Tory good-night, took his departure.

Robert Royal went into the house, and to the library, where he brought forth a bottle of wine, and proceeded to drink huge draughts of it.

"Fool that I was, to allow myself to make the mistake that I did, in taking the major to the girl's room, to let him see her!" he muttered. "If I had not done that, those 'Liberty Boys' would not have known she was in the house, and while they would have captured the major, just the same, they would not have taken Helen away from me. Well, it can't be helped now."

When he had finished the bottle of wine the Tory went to bed, but not to sleep.

The British captain and his men made their way to the British encampment, and the officer went at once to the tent occupied by General Howe.

"General," he said, on being admitted to the commander-in-chief's presence, "Major Milton has been captured by the rebels."

General Howe leaped to his feet in excitement, a look of dismay and consternation on his face.

"You don't mean it, captain!" he cried.

"Yes, it is true, your excellency."

"Well, that is bad news—very, very bad news!"

CHAPTER XII.

A SHREWD TRICK.

"Yes, I did my best to rescue him, sir, but we got to the home of Robert Royal just a bit too late."

"Tell me all about it, captain."

The officer did so, and General Howe sent for some of the members of his staff, and when they came he told them about the capture of Major Milton, and asked them what had better be done.

"Do you suppose there is any chance that he might be rescued?" he asked, in conclusion.

The officers shook their heads.

"I don't think so," replied General Knyphausen.

"What is to be done, then? We must make some attempt to get the major back."

"There is only one thing that I can think of," said another officer, "and that is this. We have Dick Slater, the famous rebel spy, a prisoner in our camp, and while he is not the same in rank as the major, being only a captain, his reputation as a scout and spy is such that it will make about an equal thing to exchange him for the major."

General Howe nodded his head, a look of chagrin and disappointment on his face.

"I hate to give that rebel spy up," he said, "but I suppose I shall have to do it. It is, as you say, the only possible chance we have of getting the major back."

"True," said General Cornwallis. "But do you think Washington will be willing to give up Major Milton for Dick Slater?"

"There is no doubt that he will be willing to do so," said Howe. "Washington thinks very highly of the commander of the 'Liberty Boys,' I am sure, and will be glad to get the youth back on any terms."

"Well, it is lucky that Captain Shannon captured Slater, under the circumstances," said Cornwallis. "It makes it possible for us to negotiate for the return of the major."

"Yes, and in the morning I will send a messenger under a flag of truce, and make the offer to exchange prisoners," said General Howe.

This was just what the "Liberty Boys" wanted.

Then the members of the general's staff went back to their tents, and the commander-in-chief lay down, to try to get some sleep, but in this he was not very successful. He could not help thinking of how he was to be cheated out of the satisfaction he had expected to experience in ridding the British cause of one of the worst menaces it had in America, the brave Dick Slater.

"It can't be helped, however," the general said to himself. "I shall have to let him go in order to save the major, for I am suspicious that his capture was effected on purpose to place them in possession of a threat against me, in that, if I were to shoot or hang Dick Slater, they would do the same with the major."

The reason the British captain and his thirty men had been unable to see or hear anything more of the "Liberty Boys" after the latter rowed and swam out into the river, from the boat-house, is easily explained.

They had been deceived by a shrewd, yet simple trick.

The redcoats had surmised that the patriots would go upstream because of the fact that the patriot army lay in that direction; but instead the boys, with the prisoner and the rescued girl, went downstream.

"We will have to go much farther in order to reach the patriot encampment," said Bob. "But it is much safer, for I am confident the redcoats will look for us to try to make a landing up the river somewhere."

The other youths thought the same, and so the boat was headed downstream. When they were out far enough so that they felt safe, and there was no danger of being seen, Bob and Mark stopped rowing, and called cautiously to the swimming "Liberty Boys."

Soon all seven of the youths were on hand, and Bob instructed them to take hold of the boat, near the stern, and hold on.

"We'll tow you along," he said, "and then we will be sure of all landing at the same spot."

"Yes, that's a good idea," said Mark.

"Were any of you hit by the bullet the redcoat fired?" asked Bob.

"No; he never touched any of us, Bob," replied one.

"All right; then I guess we are ready to continue on our way."

The two resumed rowing, and the boat moved down the stream at a very good speed, the current being with them, and making it much easier pulling.

They did not go down more than half a mile.

"There is no use of going very far, I am sure," said Bob. "For I would be willing to wager the redcoats are up the river, looking for us."

So they rowed ashore, and made a landing.

The prisoner was lifted out of the boat, and it was found that he had regained consciousness. The girl, Helen Bundy, having been seated in the bow, had been the first one to leap ashore.

The weapons were then taken from the boat, where they had been placed.

The major was inclined to be stubborn, and fearing he might make an outcry that would be heard by the enemy, the youths gagged him.

Then the little party set out, Bob and the girl walking in the lead, the youths following, with the major in their midst.

The officer was stubborn, and did not want to walk, but he was given some kicks and cuffs, and finally decided that it would be best for him to move along without any foolishness.

He would not walk very fast, however, but Bob did not care for that, as he did not wish to overtax the strength of Miss Bundy.

They walked onward for more than an hour, and were then a mile or a mile and a half to the west of the British encampment; they had passed it at a distance of a mile to the southward.

They now turned almost at right angles, and marched toward the north. After going in this direction a distance of about three miles, they would then turn toward the east, and a walk of a mile and a half would take them to the patriot encampment.

To reach their destination by this route they would be making two-thirds of a circuit of the British encampment, and walking several miles farther than would have been necessary had they gone the other way, but it was much safer, as they would in all probability have been captured had they tried to go the short route.

When they had gone perhaps two miles in a northerly direction, they came to the home of Mr. Metcalf. The girl recognized the place.

"This is Mr. Metcalf's house," she exclaimed. "Oh, I am so glad, for my home is only one mile farther on."

"That is good news," said Bob. "I am glad for your sake."

Twenty minutes later they came to another house, and the girl said this was her home.

All entered the yard, and Bob and Helen stepped up on the porch, and the youth knocked on the door.

There was no response, and as there was no light to be seen within there was little doubt that the inmates were in bed.

"Father and mother are asleep, likely," said the girl, her voice trembling slightly with eagerness, and then she rapped on the door and called out:

"Father! mother! It is I, Helen! Open the door."

There were exclamations from within, and a few minutes

later the door opened, showing a man holding a candle, and a woman.

"Oh, Helen, my darling!" cried the woman, seizing the girl and hugging her. "Are you indeed back, safe and well! And where have you been, dear?"

"I was kidnapped, mother, by men in the employ of Robert Royal."

"Kidnapped!" cried the parents in unison. "And by men in the employ of Robert Royal?"

"Yes; and he has held me a prisoner in his house till to-night, when these brave young gentlemen rescued me."

"My poor child!" cried the woman.

"The villain!" cried Mr. Bundy, having reference to Royal, and he pressed his daughter to his breast, and kissed her.

Then he stepped out, and said:

"Young gentlemen, I thank you for what you have done for our daughter, and for us. We have mourned our child as lost to us forever, and this is like an appearance from the dead. We can never thank you enough for what you have done."

"We do not wish thanks, sir," said Bob. "We were glad to do your daughter a kindness, and at the same time do a Tory an ill turn."

"Then you are patriots."

"Yes, father; they are 'The Liberty Boys of '76,' of whom we have often heard. And don't you see they have a British officer a prisoner in their midst?"

"So I see. Well, I am glad of it."

Bob now told Helen and her delighted parents that he and his comrades must be going, and the girl stepped out, and thanked them sincerely and earnestly for what they had done for her.

"If it should happen that there should be anything which you think I or my father or mother could do to aid you in any way, you have but to let us know, Mr. Estabrook," she said. "We owe you a debt that we can never cancel, but we would be glad of a chance to do something to show our appreciation of your kindness."

"That is all right, Miss Bundy," replied Bob. "You owe us nothing, and we want that you shall look at it in that light."

Then Bob cautioned her to be on her guard in the future.

"That scoundrel, Robert Royal, may try to get hold of you again, Miss Helen," he said, "so do not venture away from the house alone."

"I shall be very careful, Mr. Estabrook," was the reply. "I do not wish to give him another chance at me," and she shuddered.

"No, indeed. You must be very careful, Helen," said her mother.

Then Bob and the "Liberty Boys" said good-night, and took their departure, going in the direction of the patriot encampment.

As soon as the youths had gone Mr. and Mrs. Bundy and Helen entered the house, closed and barred the door, and taking seats in the sitting-room, remained there for nearly

an hour, during which time the girl told the story of her adventures since disappearing from home.

One evening, a week before, while coming from the home of a neighbor, she was seized by two masked men, while passing through a heavy strip of timber, and as soon as it was dark the two men took her to the home of Robert Royal, forcing her to walk all the way; here she had been locked up in a room, and kept a close prisoner, Royal visiting her and doing his best to persuade or threaten her into promising to marry him. The Tory had tried to win her before that, and had been repeatedly refused, and that was the reason he had got the men to kidnap the girl. He hoped that by getting her in his house he would be able either by coaxing or threatening to get her to agree to become Mrs. Royal. The girl had remained firm, however, and had treated the scoundrel with the scorn his actions deserved, and as we have seen, she had been rescued by Bob Estabrook and the "Liberty Boys."

CHAPTER XIII.

AN EXCHANGE.

It was half-past eleven o'clock when Bob Estabrook and his eleven comrades, with their prisoner, arrived at the patriot encampment.

Bob felt sure that the commander-in-chief would be up, and so they went straight to the general's tent.

The orderly said the general had not retired, and ushered Bob and two of his comrades and the prisoner in.

General Washington's face lighted up when he saw who his prisoners were.

"Ah, you are back, Bob?" he exclaimed. "And you have been successful, I see," with a glance at the British officer.

"Yes, your excellency," replied Bob. "We were successful, but it was by a close shave that we succeeded in making our escape with the prisoner after securing him."

"Tell me about it, Bob."

The youth did so, the general listening with interest.

"You did well," he said, when Bob had finished. "And you were fortunate in bringing away the prisoner, after getting hold of him."

"I think we were very fortunate, sir."

"Yes, indeed."

Then the general turned toward the prisoner.

"What is your name, sir?" he asked.

"I am Major Milton, sir," was the dignified reply—the youths had removed the gag from the major's mouth immediately after entering.

"Well, Major Milton, we have you fast, this time," with a smile.

"It seems so, sir; it is the fortune of war, I suppose."

"Yes; but you will not be with us long, I am confident." The prisoner looked surprised.

"No?" he remarked, interrogatively.

"No. You see, it is this way. Your men captured one of my best spies to-night, and your capture was brought about in order that I might make an offer of exchange with General Howe."

"Ah, that is it, eh?" There was a pleased look on the major's face. Evidently he was glad to learn that there was a probability that he would not long be held a prisoner.

"Yes."

"Who is the spy in question, sir?"

"His name is Dick Slater."

The major started.

"I have heard of him," he said. "He is a famous scout and spy."

"Yes, indeed; he is the best in the patriot army. You people seem to think so at any rate," with a smile, "for I understand General Howe has long had an offer of five hundred pounds standing for the capture of Dick Slater."

"I know that to be a fact, sir," said the major.

"Well, in the morning I shall send a messenger to General Howe, under cover of a flag of truce, and make an offer to exchange you for Dick."

"I am glad to hear it, sir, and I am glad that your spy is a prisoner in our hands. Were it not the case I might have to remain here with you quite a while. I might have been shot or hung."

"Yes, that is true; though we might not have made such strenuous efforts to capture you had Dick Slater not been a prisoner in the hands of your people."

Then the general ordered that the major be taken to a tent and guarded closely during the rest of the night.

"Whatever else may happen, see to it that he does not escape, Bob," the commander-in-chief said, earnestly. "The safety, perhaps even the life of Dick depends on our having the major to offer in exchange for him in the morning."

"I will place a double guard over him, your excellency," said Bob. "You need have no fear that he will escape."

Then the "Liberty Boys" led the prisoner out of the general's tent, and to another, where he was given a blanket to lie on.

To make assurance doubly sure, Bob tied the prisoner's hands, and, bound hand and foot, it did not seem likely that he would be able to make any attempt at escaping.

Unwilling to take any chances whatever, however, Bob placed a double guard around the tent, and thus made sure that the prisoner would be there in the morning.

Next morning, just after breakfast, and while General Washington was giving Bob instructions what to say—for Bob to be the messenger to the British general—a British soldier was seen approaching, carrying a white cloth on the barrel of a musket.

"There comes a messenger from the British!" cried a soldier, and word was at once carried to Washington, who, suspecting what it portended, came forth from his tent, Bob accompanying him.

"I have an idea the messenger is coming to make an offer of exchange, Bob," said the general, with a smile.

"I hope so, sir," was the reply.

When the redcoat soldier came near enough he was challenged, and said he wished to see the commander-in-chief of the patriot army.

"I am the bearer of a message from General Howe to General Washington," he said.

The officer of the guard escorted the redcoat into the encampment, and to where the commander-in-chief stood.

"Here is a messenger from General Howe, your excellency," he said.

General Washington returned the British soldier's salute, and said:

"What is wanted, my man?"

"Here is a letter which will explain all, sir," was the reply, and the messenger produced a letter and handed it to the patriot commander.

General Washington read the letter, and nodded his head.

"It is as I expected," he said. "General Howe wishes to exchange prisoners—Dick Slater for Major Milton."

"Hurrah!" cried Bob. "Dick will soon be free!"

The commander-in-chief turned to the messenger, and said:

"Go back to General Howe and tell him that I accept his proposition to exchange prisoners. Tell him to send Dick Slater to a point midway between our lines, with an escort of not more than four men, and I will do the same with Major Milton."

"Very well, sir," and then the British soldier saluted, and took his departure.

The messenger was given half an hour to return to the British encampment and make his report, and then four of the "Liberty Boys" left the patriot encampment with Major Milton in their midst.

The four redcoats from the British encampment, with Dick in their midst, arrived at the point designated at almost the same time that the "Liberty Boys" arrived there, and it took but a minute to make the exchange of prisoners, salute one another and part company.

"Say, this is a big surprise, and a very pleasant one, for me, Bob," said Dick. "I was not expecting to get out of the hands of the British so quickly and easily."

"Well, you see, Dick, we learned that you had been captured, and happening to find out that this Major Milton was visiting at the home of Robert Royal, the Tory, we made up our minds to capture the officer, in order to force General Howe to an exchange. And we succeeded, too, though it was only by a very close shave."

"Tell me all about it, Bob."

Bob told the story of the capture of Major Milton, and the rescue of Helen Bundy from the power of the Tory, Robert Royal, and Dick expressed as much pleasure at the rescue of the maiden, even though he had never heard of her before, as he did at the capture of the major, which had resulted in his own freedom.

"That Tory, Robert Royal, must be the biggest kind of a scoundrel, Bob," he said.

"He certainly is, Dick; but I tell you we gave him a scare that may do him some good."

The youth shook his head.

"I don't think just a scare will do him much good," he said. "You have to more than half kill such fellows in order to teach them anything."

"Yes, that's true, too, I guess."

"And Jennie Metcalf came to the camp and told you of my capture, Bob?" Dick remarked.

"Yes; she is a brave girl, isn't she, to come two miles or more through the timber and darkness alone, to bring us the information."

"You are right. She is a brave and noble-hearted girl."

"Fred Hardy thinks so," said Bob, with a grin.

"How is that?" asked Dick.

"Well, I told Fred to walk home with Jennie, you know, as I didn't think it right to let her go back alone, and he did so. The result is that all he could talk about this morning at breakfast was Jennie Metcalf. I think he has fallen dead in love with her."

"Well, I'm glad of it, if she takes a liking to him in return, for Fred is a fine fellow."

"He certainly is; he would make a good husband for any girl."

"So he would."

"And she will make a wife that any fellow might be proud of."

"Yes, indeed."

The youths were close to the patriot encampment now, and a few moments later were hailed by the sentinel. He knew who they were, however, and the hail was merely a matter of form. The sentinel happened to be one of the "Liberty Boys," and he was delighted when he saw Dick, and shook hands with him, and congratulated him on getting out of the hands of the enemy.

The youths then entered the encampment, and as Dick was seen a wild cheer went up from hundreds of throats, for the brave and handsome youth was known to all the patriot soldiers, and was loved and respected by all.

The entire patriot army was proud of Dick Slater, and were proud of his reputation as being the most famous scout and spy of the Revolution, as well as one of the fiercest and most desperate fighters that ever stepped on a field of battle.

The little party made straight for the tent of General Washington, Dick doffing his hat and bowing right and left in acknowledgment of the greetings as he went, and as they approached the tent the commander-in-chief came forth. The cheering had apprised him of the fact that Dick was coming.

"Well, well, Dick; I am indeed glad to see you again, alive and well," General Washington exclaimed, giving the youth his hand.

"Thank you, your excellency," said Dick. "I am indeed glad to be back here, alive and well. I thought, last night, that the chances were good that I might never get back."

"And you might not have done so had not your comrades

here gone forth and made a capture which enabled us to make the exchange with the British commander."

The other officers of General Washington's staff now appeared, and shook Dick by the hand, and congratulated him on his escape from the death which had threatened him as a captured spy.

"They would undoubtedly have shot or hanged you, my boy, had not your comrades captured Major Milton, and thus made it possible for an exchange to be effected," said General Greene.

"Well, I'm glad the boys captured the major then!" said Dick, with a smile.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE METCALF BROTHERS VISIT THEIR PARENTS.

There was not much stir in either the British or patriot camps up till noon of this day, but in the afternoon there were several small skirmishes, without much damage being done on either side.

About the middle of the afternoon a force of two hundred patriot soldiers entered the encampment, and this was the party that had been sent over into New Jersey by the commander-in-chief. The Metcalf boys were in the party, and while two were slightly wounded—the wounds having been received in the battle of the Brandywine—the others were well and hearty.

Bob went to them, and told them how anxious their father, mother, and sister had been about them, and the brothers went to General Washington and asked permission to visit their home.

"Wait till evening," said the commander-in-chief, "and then you may go. I think it would be unsafe to try to go there in the daytime, as you might be seen and captured."

"Very well. We will wait till nightfall," said one of the young men, and they went back to their company.

The patriot army held its position, and remained encamped there, and as soon as it was dark the Metcalf boys accompanied by Fred Hardy, who was glad of an excuse to get to go and see Jennie Metcalf, set out for the young men's home.

When they came to the Bundy home, which they passed in going to the Metcalf house, Frank Metcalf told the others to go on, and that he would come later.

"My sweetheart lives here," he said. "And I am going to stop and have a few kisses before going on home."

"We'll tell the folks where you are, Frank," said one, and they went on.

The young man went to the house and knocked on the door. It was opened by Helen herself, and when she saw who it was that was standing there, a cry of joy escaped her lips, and she leaped into her lover's arms.

"Oh, Frank, Frank! how glad I am to see you again, alive and well," she cried.

Frank gave her a hug and a dozen kisses, and then said:

"And how glad I am to see you again, alive and well, sweetheart."

"Come in, Frank, dear," said the happy girl. "Father and mother will be so glad to see you."

The young man entered, and was given a hearty greeting by Helen's parents, who thought a great deal of their daughter's stalwart lover.

"How are your brothers, Frank?" asked Mrs. Bundy, when they had become seated in the sitting-room.

"They are all alive and about as well as usual," was the reply. "Tom and Jack were wounded in the battle of the Brandywine, but not seriously, and they have not been incapacitated from camp-life."

The conversation went on, and presently Helen told Frank how she had been kidnapped by Robert Royal, and how the "Liberty Boys" had rescued her.

Frank was very angry when he heard how the Tory had acted.

"If ever I meet that scoundrel I will shoot him, as sure as my name is Frank Metcalf!" he said, with grim earnestness. "Such a scoundrel ought not to be allowed to live and pollute the atmosphere."

Then he spoke highly of the "Liberty Boys."

"They are brave and noble-hearted fellows," he said. "And I shall not forget that to them I owe your rescue, sis. One of the 'Liberty Boys,' Fred Hardy by name, is with us to-night, and has gone on to our home with others. He is in love with Sister Jennie, and I am D. it, and hope she will take a liking to him."

"Do I if it will make her as happy as my love for snakes me, Frank," said Helen in a low voice.

The happy young patriot soldier caught his sweetheart's eye between his hands and gave her a kiss, and Mr. and Mrs. Bundy laughingly said they guessed it was time for to get out and leave the two alone, and they went. This course, was satisfactory to the young couple, but will not make any attempt at describing their conversa-

Indeed, it was carried on in tones too low to be heard by a third party anyway.

Then the Metcalf boys and Fred Hardy arrived at the Metcalf home there was great rejoicing by Mr. Mrs., and Mrs. Metcalf. They were delighted to see their sons and others, as may well be supposed, and inquiries were quickly made for Frank.

Before the young men could reply, and explain, however, Jennie cried:

"Oh, I know where Frank is—at Mr. Bundy's."

"What a good guesser you are, sis," laughed Jack Metcalf, who was something of a tease. And he added: "And now, seeing that you are a good guesser, make a guess as to the reason Fred, here, came along with us this evening," and he pointed toward Fred Hardy, who blushed and looked confused.

Jennie colored up like a peony in full bloom, and Jack gave utterance to a delighted chuckle.

"Ha, ha, ha!" he laughed. "I see you have guessed it, sis. Your face tells us that." And then to Fred he said:

"That's all right, old fellow. Don't blush so. Let sis do that, for it is very becoming to girls and women, and they can beat the boys and men at it all hollow. For proof, look at Jennie's face."

"Oh, you rascal!" cried the girl, and she gave her teasing brother a slap that was anything but light, but which only elicited added laughter from the recipient.

After they had spent half an hour or so in conversation, and had told their adventures since last they were at home, the Metcalf boys went upstairs to see the wounded redcoat spy, Ralph Winchester. He was getting along very well, and was receiving such good treatment at the hands of the members of the Metcalf family that he was very pleasant toward the young men.

"I could not ask for better treatment," he said, "and I am glad to see you, even though you are enemies; for anybody bearing the name of Metcalf will ever have my heartiest good will."

"And we are glad to know you," replied one of the boys. "We know how to treat a wounded enemy, I am sure."

Fred Hardy found something much more interesting downstairs, and did not go up to see the redcoat. He was talking to Jennie, and judging by the girl's looks and actions, she was about as well pleased as was Fred. One could scarcely look at the happy light in her eyes and doubt that she loved the young "Liberty Boy."

Frank arrived an hour later, and was given a hearty and joyous greeting by his parents and sister.

The brothers of Jennie, and Fred Hardy, remained two hours longer, and then bade the folks good-by, and took their departure. Fred was very happy, for he had had an hour's conversation with Jennie, alone, and had won from her the confession that she loved him, and the promise that when the war was over she would be his wife.

When the little party was perhaps one hundred yards from the Bundy home they were startled by hearing a scream in a woman's voice. It came from the direction of the house, and it was seen that the front door was open. Some sort of a struggle was going on on the front porch, as could be seen in the light which streamed out through the doorway.

"That was Helen's voice!" cried Frank in an agonized tone, and he bounded toward the house with the speed of a panther.

After him bounded his brothers and Fred Hardy, and they were quickly at the house. As they leaped up on the porch it was seen that Helen Bundy was held by two men, while three more stood nearby. In the light Frank recognized one of the three as being Robert Royal, the Tory who had held Helen prisoner once before, and he realized instantly that the scoundrel had come to make a prisoner of her again. As this realization came to him he drew his pistol and fired at the Tory scoundrel.

Robert Royal gave utterance to a howl of pain, and

reeled and almost fell, but immediately recovered and leaping from the porch, dashed away in the darkness, followed by another shot from a second pistol in Frank's hand.

Robert Royal's tools—for such the four were—realized that the game was up, and they let go of Helen and leaped away with all possible speed, and as soon as they were out of range with Helen, so they could be fired at without danger of hitting the girl, the Metcalf boys and Fred Hardy opened fire on them.

Two were dropped dead in their tracks, but the other two got away.

After firing the two shots at Robert Royal, Frank leaped forward and caught Helen in his arms.

"Are you hurt, sweetheart?" he asked anxiously. "Did the scoundrels handle you roughly?"

"No, Frank," was the reply, "but they tied father and mother and shut them in a bedroom. Please come and help me free them."

Frank hastened to do as Helen asked, and they soon freed the girl's parents.

Then Helen explained. They had heard a knock, she said, and thinking it might be Frank back again, after visiting his home folks, Helen had opened the door. She was seized by two men, while two more seized her father and mother, and tied them and shut them up in the room. Robert Royal was also with them, and he ordered the two men to bind the girl's arms. It was then that she gave utterance to the scream that the seven young men had heard.

"Well, it was lucky that we were on hand to save you, Helen," said Frank. "And, jove, I hope I gave that scoundrel, Robert Royal, a fatal wound. I am confident I wounded him, for he reeled after my first shot."

The Metcalf boys and Fred Hardy got a spade, and buried the two dead men, and they recognized the two dead tools of Royal as being a couple of notorious Tories of the vicinity of the Royal home.

A half-hour later the young men bade the Bundys good-night, and took their departure, Frank cautioning his sweetheart again and again to be careful, and not give Royal another chance to capture her.

Had he but known it the caution was unnecessary. Robert Royal had received a fatal wound from the first pistol bullet fired by Frank, and lived only a few hours after reaching his home.

Next day the British army made a determined attempt to advance, and General Washington retreated slowly, contesting every foot of the ground.

When night came, and they went into camp, it was found that they had been forced back about five miles.

A close watch was kept on the British throughout the night, by means of scouts, but the redcoats remained quietly in their encampment, and made no move toward making a night attack.

"I think we will be able to hold the British back from Philadelphia at least two days longer," said Washington

to his staff officers, next morning. "That will make ten days that we will have held them in check, and I believe it will be the means of causing the surrender of Burgoyne, for I shall endeavor to hold Howe back, and keep him from going to Burgoyne's aid."

And he did succeed in holding the British army back the two days, as he figured on doing. Yes, and four days more on top of that, making fourteen days in all that he had detained the British.

General Cornwallis, with a portion of the army, marched into Philadelphia on September 26th, and Howe, with the rest of the army, marched to Germantown and took up his position there.

General Washington withdrew the patriot army to westward, not far from Valley Forge, and went into camp. He held his army in readiness to pounce upon the enemy and detain it, in case it started to march to the northward.

Howe did not attempt to go to Burgoyne's aid. Doubtless he thought winter was too near at hand to start on a long march; so he settled down to remain in and around Philadelphia, and on October 17th Burgoyne surrendered to General Gates, at Saratoga. The commander-in-chief's prophecy was thus proved to have been correct.

Ralph Winchester, the British spy, recovered and returned to the British army, and he was so grateful for kind treatment he had received at the hands of the rebels that he asked it as a special favor to himself that they be not bothered in any way by the British soldiers when out foraging.

Captain Shannon did not receive the five hundred pounds that he had been promised for capturing Dick Slater. General Howe said that as he had been forced to give the "Liberty Boy" up the next day, in exchange for Major Milton, he would not pay the reward. This made Captain Shannon so angry and disgusted—for he considered, and justly, that he was entitled to the reward—that he deserted and went over to the patriot army, and afterward fought side by side with Dick Slater in several battles.

When the war ended, Fred Hardy and Jennie Metcalf and Frank Metcalf and Helen Bundy were married, and lived neighbors to each other for many, many years, rearing happy families.

Thus ends the story of "The Liberty Boys' Cunning." THE END.

The next number (106) of "The Liberty Boys of '76" will contain "THE LIBERTY BOYS' 'BIG HIT' OR KNOCKING THE REDCOATS OUT," by Harry Moore.

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